



# The Juggler of Notre Dame and the Medievalizing of Modernity

VOLUME 3: THE AMERICAN MIDDLE AGES

JAN M. ZIOLKOWSKI

THE JUGGLER OF NOTRE DAME

VOLUME 3



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Vol. 3: The American Middle Ages

*Jan M. Ziolkowski*





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To Piero Boitani

Day by day America drifts farther & farther away from Europe. The great currents of cosmic life drive us—immense, floating, unattached continent that we are—farther away from all that is rooted in or anchored to the past. It would be a wretched and unworthy patriotism, or mere love of paradox, or an unmanly timidity and self-distrust, that would hinder one, who has known the best, from saying distinctly, “This is not the best & will not in our time be the best.”

—Charles Eliot Norton



# Note to the Reader

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This volume is the third of a half dozen. Together, the six form *The Juggler of Notre Dame and the Medievalizing of Modernity*. The book series as a whole probes one medieval story, its reception in culture from the Franco-Prussian War until today, and the placement of that reception within medieval revivalism as a larger cultural phenomenon. The study has been designed to proceed largely in chronological order, but the progression across the centuries and decades is relieved by thematic chapters that deal with topics not restricted to any single time period.

This third installment, entitled “The American Middle Ages,” explores the reasons why the American not-so-public intellectual Henry Adams was drawn to the medieval story and more largely why many of his compatriots in the Gilded Age turned to the literature and architecture of the Middle Ages. The fourth in the series, under the heading “Picture That: Making a Show of the Jongleur,” follows the tracks of the medieval entertainer as he wends his way out of nineteenth-century scholarship and literature, into opera in the early decades of the twentieth century. It includes attention to issues, as important in the Middle Ages as in modernity, relating to images of the Virgin, the significance of the crypt, and the illumination of Madonnas. Later volumes trace the story of the story down to the present day.

The chapters are followed by endnotes. Rather than being numbered, these notes are keyed to the words and phrases in the text that are presented in a different color. After the endnotes come the bibliography and illustration credits. In each volume-by-volume index, the names of most people have lifespans, regnal dates, or at least death dates.

One comment on the title of the story is in order. In proper French, Notre-Dame has a hyphen when the phrase refers to a building, institution, or place. Notre Dame, without the mark, refers to the woman, the mother of Jesus. In my own prose, the title is given in the form *Le jongleur de Notre Dame*, but the last two words will be found hyphenated in quotations and bibliographic citations if the original is so punctuated.

All translations are mine, unless otherwise specified.





# 1. The Tumbling Worlds of Henry Adams

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## Adams Family

Who we are is who we were

—ascribed, by cinematic license, to  
John Quincy Adams

From the 1890s on, the ground for the reception of the medieval tale *Our Lady's Tumbler* in the United States was readied among the elite. Yet the individuals and media involved in the projection of the story in the New World before the cultured public are only loosely comparable to those who from the 1870s on motivated the success of the medieval poem and the fin-de-siècle short story in France. Among the authors who ensured that cultivated readers would be acquainted with the narrative, one stands out: Henry Brooks Adams. He contributed in major ways to the hearty American response. Not a translator in the strict sense, but not a short story writer either, he managed through an amalgam of philosophizing and historical musing to promote the medieval minstrel. More broadly, he propelled the equally zestful Americanizing of the Middle Ages in universities, museums, and other cultural institutions in the early twentieth century. He stood out as far and away the best-known panjandrum among those of his times who helped to transmit the French poem to a large and enthusiastic readership of his countrymen.

Neither a philologist like Gaston Paris nor a recognized author of fiction like Anatole France, Adams defies easy pigeonholing, professionally and personally. As a onetime historian and an on-again, off-again medievalist, he may seem an odd man to have taken up in his later years the role of Prometheus. In this guise, he rolled back the centuries to explore the Middle Ages so that he could bring forth to America what he chose to understand as their luminosity. He carried the torch of his distinctive medievalism to a world only lately afire with incandescent lighting. By just a few decades, he anticipated mushroom clouds from atomic bombs. Because his

seeming clairvoyance rendered him an object of fascination to many throughout the twentieth century, he deserves our close attention. His life has much to disclose about the medievalism of the nineteenth century that prepared the way for the success of medievaesque literature and architecture in the decades to follow. Although much about him is *sui generis*, his conception of the Middle Ages and of the Virgin Mary as unifying counterweights to the threatening multiplicity of modernity can tell us much about why many of his countrymen embraced *Our Lady's Tumbler* and why his nation rode surges of Gothicizing construction long after the vogue had ended in the Old World. To come to terms with any of these developments, we need to fathom his cultural and intellectual formation.

As his family name hints, Henry Adams issued from an illustrious lineage (see Fig. 1.1) of Yankee blue bloods, if that last accumulation of words is allowable and not intrinsically incompatible. Across the generations, the purebred genealogy of Adamses propagated men who were distinguished in national politics, talented in writing, and hard to handle in personality. His bloodline was closely conterminous with the nineteenth-century history of his nation. To look only at the ancestors of whom he was a direct descendant, and to start at the beginning, he was the great-grandson of a Founding Father, John Adams. The second president of the United States of America, this Adams was the first one to occupy the White House. Henry was also the grandson of John Quincy Adams, the sixth chief executive of the nation and congressman for two decades after he held the highest office; and he was the son of Charles Francis Adams Sr., by turns politician and diplomat. In the latter capacity, Charles served during the Civil War as minister to Great Britain, the equivalent in those days to an ambassador (see Fig. 1.2). All these preceding Adamses became imagoes that informed the reactions of Henry to the present and past alike. Whatever else he made himself, this scion of the distinguished family was an Adams, bred to bear the burden of illustrious predecessors.

None of Henry Adams's living relatives wielded sociopolitical influence on a par with that of their presidential predecessors. Even so, the gentry to which he belonged stayed **wealthy and prestigious**. He knew that he had been to the manner born, with a silver spoon in his mouth. In today's nomenclature, he possessed a bushel basket of unearned privilege. Even so, by his generation, the power of the great Adams kinship group was indisputably **waning**. Having special perquisites and being groomed for success could take his three brothers and him only so far. Of the four, Henry alone neither earned a law degree nor held public office. In fact, he never received a call to any sort of nonacademic position that seemed to fit the bill. He had the background and skills to be on the fast track to somewhere, but the question was to where.

Yet not all might is political—or military. Although a spent force among politicians, Henry Adams belonged without doubt to the cultural flowerings first in Massachusetts, and later in the District of Columbia. Since colonial times, Boston, “the City on a Hill,” had been regarded, or at least had postured itself, as “**the Athens of America**.” Cambridge, its neighbor across the Charles River, was, as still today,

the home of Harvard University, where Adams was first an undergraduate and later a faculty member. Washington was and remains the governmental heart of the country. In Boston, Cambridge, the nation's capital, and wherever else in the world he traveled in body or mind, Adams was fascinated by might in all its iterations, such as political, psychological, physical, and sexual. As his life sped by, he recognized that there was no point in angling for such strength. He could not wield power himself. Later, he accepted that he could in only the most marginal ways guide the movers and shakers who exerted it. He was never to be a puppetmaster. What was the solace, if any, for what may have initially been a deflating realization for him and his family? He understood that as a man of letters he was uniquely positioned and proficient in farsighted analysis and description of power and its operations. While his wife lived, their home attracted the chattering classes. After her death, even more than before, he staked most of his energies on the bet that he could make a mark through his writing.

## The Adams Family

### The Direct Ancestors of Henry Adams and His Siblings

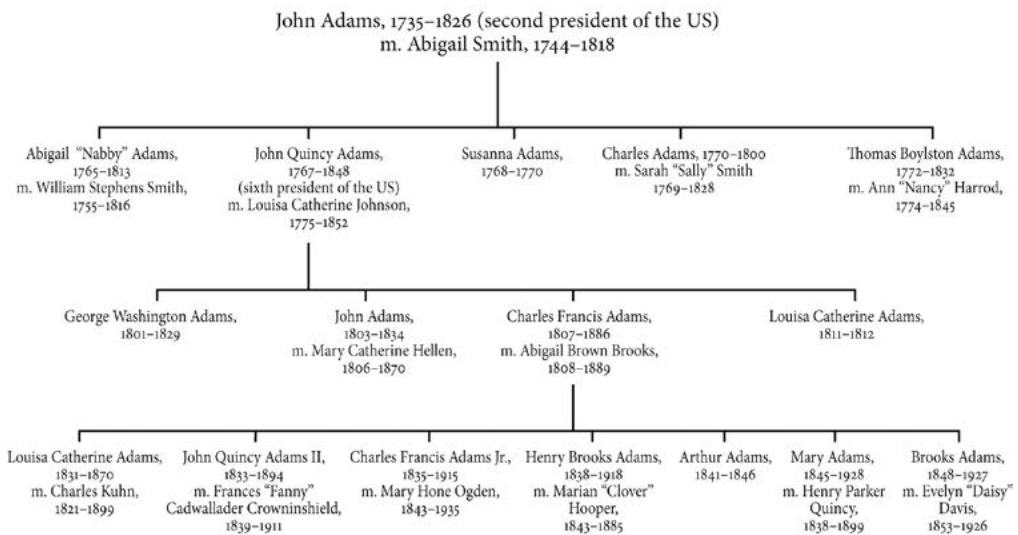


Fig. 1.1 The Adams family tree, beginning with President John Adams (1735-1826).  
Vector art by Melissa Tandysh, 2016. Image courtesy of Melissa Tandysh. All rights reserved.

On May 12, 1780, John Adams, who established the family franchise, posted a letter to his wife from Paris, where he found himself saddled with the responsibilities of both [serving as an envoy](#) and negotiating a peace treaty with Britain. In penning his missive to Abigail, her husband revealed that he had limited leisure to enjoy the beauty of France. Then, in oft-cited words, he displayed equal perspicacity about the present he inhabited and prescience about the future that lay before his progeny:



I must study Politicks and War that my sons may have liberty to study Mathematicks and Philosophy. My sons ought to study Mathematicks and Philosophy, Geography, natural History, Naval Architecture, navigation, Commerce and Agriculture, in order to give their Children a right to study Painting, Poetry, Musick, Architecture, Statuary, Tapestry and Porcelaine.

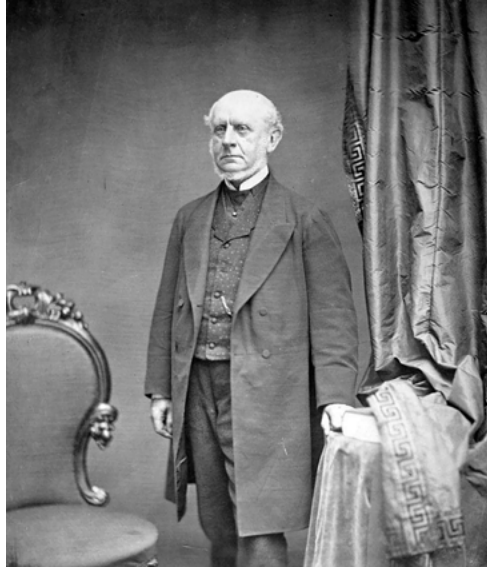


Fig. 1.2 Charles Francis Adams. Photograph by Matthew Brady, ca. 1860. Washington, DC, National Portrait Gallery.

With a moratorium of one generation, John Adams's descendants followed the blueprint that their forebear had drafted. They upheld his transgenerational curriculum.

For his great-grandson, study was indeed the most navigable route to success. As the proverb says, the pen is mightier than the sword. By putting into writing the results of his research and rumination, Henry Adams crowned the achievements of the dynasty. Beyond any other in his age cohort, he guaranteed through prolific publications in American history and journalism that his celebrated clan would exercise continued preeminence in the twentieth century. His profile grows only more daunting when we add to the picture two novels, his authorship of which he kept tightly under wraps during his lifetime. The final factor is autobiography: this label, despite being a blunderbuss, is still serviceable to affix to *The Education of Henry Adams*, published in 1907.

One component in the oeuvre of this man of letters, *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres* (1904), relates to *Our Lady's Tumbler*. To be more precise, it recapitulates and quotes extensively in translation from the medieval French poem. Written late in Henry Adams's life, the volume was unique. Likely to be considered cultural history nowadays, the investigation is peppered with meditations of heterogeneous sorts.

His book, whatever name is used to categorize it generically, develops a far-reaching contrast that the author hypothesizes between the Middle Ages and his own times. By some measures, the comparison worked much to the advantage of the medieval period. In the argument, he effectively disowned the Founding Fathers, or at least he disclaimed the viability of their Enlightenment-driven outlook in his contemporary milieu of the dawning twentieth century. The friction between reasoned individualism and opposing intellectual movements remains unresolved, as we experience daily even today.

The Enlighteners had not been uniformly averse or antagonistic to the Middle Ages. Still, the United States had had in its earliest days no great exponent of relative openness to the period along the lines of, for instance, [Jean-Baptiste de La Curne de Sainte-Palaye](#). The French historian, literary historian, and lexicographer nurtured no deep sympathy with medieval civilization and culture. All the same, he was less confrontational in voicing his reservations about the era than many of his compatriots were. The outlook that prevailed among these others would have verged closer to that of Voltaire, who ventured the viewpoint that even by the late fifteenth century, the Europe of the Middle Ages lolled irrecuperably in [a mire of failings](#).

Through the successive steps of his family, Henry Adams had been acclimatized to an outlook that regarded faith itself as inherently naïve. In its place, he raised up something challengingly new and inconsistent: “the [last and greatest deity of all](#), the Virgin.” As he envisaged Mary, she embodied the ideal or fantasy of eternal womanhood. By calling her what he did, he gave her autonomy equivalent to any person of the Trinity. She subsumed the spirituality of the Middle Ages as he chose to understand it, in his idiosyncratic adaptation of medieval Christianity. Yet at the same time, he [desacralized](#) her, and in the process, he managed to put his finger upon shortcomings in the modernity that was unsettling as it quickened around him.

## Great Scott! Sir Walter

[Will our posterity understand](#) at least why he was once a luminary of the first magnitude, or wonder at their ancestors’ hallucination about a mere will-o’-the-wisp?

—Leslie Stephen,  
“Sir Walter Scott” (1871)

The nineteenth century constituted a golden age for historical novels, especially ones grounded in the history of the Middle Ages, with Sir Walter Scott in Great Britain and Victor Hugo in France. Henry Adams’s private education as a youth imparted to him a command of Greek, Latin, and French, and an exposure to German. Less formally, his recreation enabled him to steep himself in the medieval period as evoked by the

Scottish author's historical novels. According to his report, the happiest and most educational stage in his childhood consisted in summertime hours that he passed "lying on a musty heap of Congressional Documents in the old farmhouse at Quincy, reading *Quentin Durward*, *Ivanhoe*, and *The Talisman*, and raiding the garden at intervals for peaches and pears." The apposition is remarkable. The pile of records from the government in Washington mounted high enough to form a de facto sofa. What did the boy in the youngest generation of the political dynasty choose for pleasure reading as he stretched out atop the minutes of American democracy? Tales of the British Isles in the Middle Ages.

Adams says nothing at all about narrative poems by the Scottish writer, but the "Lay of the Last Minstrel" (1805) was also hugely influential (see Fig. 1.3). Gothicism was already deep-rooted by the time Scott laid down his pen. In his novel *The Antiquary* from 1816, the title character tags the people of the 1790s as a "Gothic generation." Yet by the end of Scott's life, Gothicism was rampant beyond the wildest fevered dreams of those men. The oeuvre of the antiquarian author forms the substructure of the historical or historicist novel in English literature, and the foundation is medieval. The tremendous popularity of his writings, taken together, can be overlooked easily. Today, his prose and, even more, his poems are scarcely read. Even the early twentieth-century films based on his fictions are largely unknown. But throughout most of the nineteenth century, his corpus was devoured indiscriminately by cultured Americans. This circumstance held especially true for those from Henry Adams's respectable thoroughbred social set. Scott's influence, it has been written, was so pervasive that in consequence of it, "at the Harvard commencement a boy might mount a mechanical horse and tilt at a ring." In other words, the Scottish writer may have had a share in the nineteenth-century fairground phenomenon of the carousel, which in those days enabled passengers to take a joyride on carved horses while clutching a miniature lance with which to spear a brass ring. The chivalric origins of this contraption remain only vestigially today, in the equestrianism of riding in wooden circles. The soldierly aspect has been repressed through the disappearance of weapons and targets: the circular course has been demilitarized. Yet the jousting that once took place there lingers on, encoded in language. The historical sense of this word for a merry-go-round denotes a tournament in which knights astraddle steeds compete in demonstrating their skills.

In the nineteenth century, no one escaped Scott-free. The writer published only one work explicitly for children: *Tales of a Grandfather*, in 1827–1830. Even so, his books were consumed equally by the younger set and adults. The picture of the Middle Ages presented by the novelist contributed in no small part to the entrenchment of the period in the worldview of English speakers. The idiosyncratic, pseudomedieval language that he concocted for his historical fiction was the form of Scott-ish most widely known in the nineteenth century. It could even be argued that during the Victorian age more people formed their impressions of the Middle Ages from perusing his fiction than from immersing themselves in actual medieval texts, let alone in architectural or archaeological evidence.

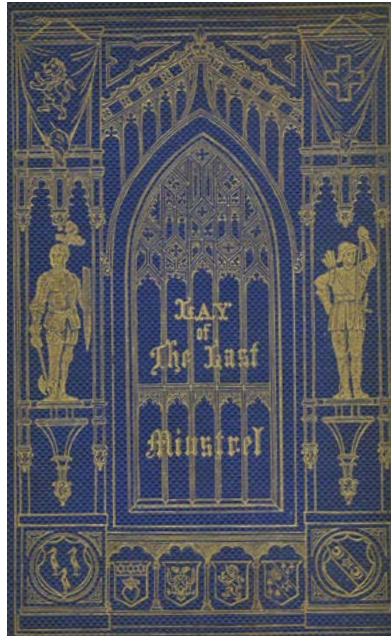


Fig. 1.3 Front cover of Walter Scott, *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, illus. Birket Foster and John Gilbert (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1854).

Adams gives us a glimpse of America being medievalized. Thus, he shows us himself as a boy, on a bucolic farm in Massachusetts. The mind of this younger self is stocked with medieval personages and places as transmitted through the imaginings of an early nineteenth-century British novelist. The influence of Scott's books penetrated [throughout the United States](#), infiltrating not only literature but also architecture and more, just as it did throughout Great Britain and the British Commonwealth. Consequently, Adams was far from the only American to have been influenced by the novels. His close friend John Hay, in an address delivered in 1897 to mark the unveiling of Scott's bust in Westminster Abbey, pointed out that "[the romances of courts and castles](#) were specially appreciated in the woods and prairies of the frontier."

The Scot's Gothicism predecessors, notably Horace Walpole and William Beckford, disseminated in their writings and architecture a [taste for medievaesque horror](#) and fantasy that reached back to Matthew "Monk" Lewis. Though Scott took the medievaesque novel away from such associations with stomach-turning fright, his output only annealed the links between Gothic literature and architecture, including landscape architecture. In no genre have the two arts interacted more robustly than in Gothic. The English nobleman Walpole (see Fig. 1.4) was known for having propelled this style of literature through his medievaesque *The Castle of Otranto* and for having achieved a similar effect in architecture and landscape architecture through Strawberry Hill (see Fig. 1.5). From within this remarkable pseudo-Gothic mansion, the author and architect published most of his writings.



Fig. 1.4 John Giles Eccardt, *Portrait of Horace Walpole*, 1754. Oil on canvas, 39.4 × 31.8 cm. London, National Portrait Gallery, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Horace\\_Walpole\\_by\\_John\\_Giles\\_Eccardt.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Horace_Walpole_by_John_Giles_Eccardt.jpg)



Fig. 1.5 Strawberry Hill, Horace Walpole's Gothic Revival villa in Twickenham, London. Photograph, 2012, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Strawberry\\_Hill\\_House\\_from\\_garden\\_in\\_2012\\_after\\_restoration.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Strawberry_Hill_House_from_garden_in_2012_after_restoration.jpg), CC BY-SA 3.0.



Beckford composed the Gothic novel *Vathek* and built as his Gothic revival country house the now-lost Fonthill Abbey (see Fig. 1.6), just as out of the ordinary as Walpole's estate. Then there is Scott himself. In addition to all he wrote, he rebuilt his residence at Abbotsford (see Fig. 1.7) in medievaesque style. His idea was that the antiquarianism of its solid castellation could affirm his place in the still largely feudal society of Scotland. By the same token, he expected his guests there also to visit the nearby Melrose Abbey (see Fig. 1.8).

Taking matters in a very different direction, Scott nudged Gothic instead toward [historicizing realism](#) or romance in depicting what purported to be medieval people, deeds, and life. In Abbotsford, the novelist nestled among objects and artifacts that made the Middle Ages present to him in material reality, just as ballads brought the period home to him literarily. Such pseudorealism, in an embryonic form, is the thrust of the preface that Walpole attached to the second edition of *The Castle of Otranto*, which became foundational to Gothic literature. Still, much of that genre is devoid of the nostalgia for that time that Walpole evidenced.

Such was the perceived realism of the fictions that *Ivanhoe* contributed to the inspiration for the famously high-budget [Eglinton Tournament](#) of 1839. [This mass spectacle](#) was the primogenitor, especially in the English-speaking world, from which originated many large-scale reenactments of medieval events down to the present day. The granddaddy of "Medieval Times"<sup>TM</sup> and the Society for Creative Anachronism, it pioneered re-creational medievalism, long before such activities had been devised or such a name had been coined to designate them. Organized and underwritten by the Earl of Eglinton, the happening drew an audience of 100,000 that counted many peers. Inclement weather rained out the first two days. The conjunction of heavyweight armor and flash-flood downpours caused serious attrition, as the phalanx of reenactors playing knights dwindled. Despite such adversities, the extravagant costumes and pageantry stamped a lasting mark on popular imagination. So too did the cost overruns.

The excesses of the tournament were far from the first manifestation of Scott-inspired dress-up. In 1823, a ball that stipulated that guests come outfitted à la *Ivanhoe* had been held already in Brussels. Outside the subculture of staunch historical re-creators, even in the first half of the twentieth century the novels still projected an afterglow of influence upon the mega donors of the day in the United States. Propelled in part by exposure to [Scott's fictions](#), the masters of the universe J. P. Morgan and John D. Rockefeller Jr. bequeathed their medieval collections to museums and footed the bill for authenticating colleges as colleges by building them in Gothic.

For the most part, the man who plied his pen under the pseudonym [Mark Twain](#) was as un-Adamsian in his background and outlook as a fellow American could have been. All the same, in an essay entitled "Castles and Culture," Samuel Langhorne Clemens recognized as clearly as had Adams the all-pervasiveness of Scott's reach. The Missourian author first excoriated and then shrugged off the obsession of his countrymen with the Middle Ages as "[The Sir Walter Disease](#)." Not immune to the

ailment himself, Twain would later produce two entire novels in which he explored the medieval period, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* in 1889 and *Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc, by the Sieur Louis de Conte* in 1896. The microbe of the medievalizing affliction infected not just literature, but architecture too. As we have seen and will continue to see, the two arts, far from strange bedfellows, have often been allied in Gothic revivals. When discussing the Old Louisiana State Capitol in Baton Rouge (see Fig. 1.9), Twain seized the occasion to dismember and deride cleverly and critically the permeation, retardation, and deformation of southern culture by the historical novels. He pronounced: "It is not conceivable that this little sham castle would have been built if he had not run the people mad, a couple of generations ago, with his mediæval romances," concluding: "[The South has not yet recovered](#) from the debilitating effects of his books."



Fig. 1.6 Fonthill Abbey, the massive Gothic Revival country house built for William Thomas Beckford, dismantled in 1845. View of the west and north fronts. Illustration by John Rutter, 1823. Published in John Rutter, *Delineations of Fonthill and its Abbey* (London: Shaftesbury, 1823), plate 11, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Fonthill\\_-\\_plate\\_11.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Fonthill_-_plate_11.jpg)



Fig. 1.7 Abbotsford House, Sir Walter Scott's medievalizing manor in the Scottish Borders. Photograph, 2008, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Abbotsford\\_Aug2009\\_01.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Abbotsford_Aug2009_01.jpg), CC BY-SA 3.0.



Fig. 1.8 Melrose Abbey, a ruined Cistercian monastery in Roxburghshire.  
Engraving by Thomas Allom and Robert Wallis, 1836.

The quip of the matchless American humorist calls out for modification mainly in that second sentence. As it turns out, the former Confederate states were far from alone in succumbing to the impulse to Gothicize such buildings. To take a particularly germane example, the Connecticut State Capitol was built between 1871 and 1878 in Hartford (see Fig. 1.10). Its hallmarks are its style, Victorian Gothic, and material, coolly (and monotonously?) glistening white marble. The architect [Richard M. Upjohn](#) won the commission over competitors who included the great Henry Hobson Richardson. Twain himself lived in the same city for two decades from 1871. Still closer to home, in fact all the way there, is the twenty-five-room house [the novelist had built](#) for his family. The structure was constructed in an idiosyncratic reflex of the High Victorian articulation of Gothic revival architecture, with vibrant colors (see Fig. 1.11). In the same chapter of his memoir *Life on the Mississippi*, Twain pays particular attention to what he calls the “Female Institute” in Columbia, Tennessee (see Fig. 1.12). He first cites a hard sell that touts the castle-like appearance of the ivy-covered towers and turreted walls, and then launches into editorializing about the drawbacks of the intramural community that is fostered within:

[Keeping school in a castle](#) is a romantic thing; as romantic as keeping hotel in a castle. By itself the imitation castle is doubtless harmless, and well enough; but as a symbol and breeder and sustainer of maudlin Middle-Age romanticism here in the greatest and worthiest of all the centuries the world has seen, it is necessarily a hurtful thing and a mistake.



The writer from Missouri implies that the medieval period may seem to be a mere placebo, when it is instead moldering and mildewed. Yet his perspective is only part of the picture. A broader lesson to be drawn may be that in the nineteenth century, even in the flinty newness of the New World and the United States of America, there was no escaping the Middle Ages—or at least not medievalism.

For all his customarily calm, cool, and collected sanity, Adams was struck as forcibly by encounters with the medieval past, both directly and indirectly, as were many of his contemporaries in both England and America. Walter Scott stayed with him indelibly in his imagination. In a letter from 1911, the historian drew a comparison between Shakespeare and the novelist that inclined much to the favor of the second. Adams declared categorically “*Ivanhoe* is an enormous work of [instinctive comprehension and genius](#).” In another letter from 1913, he described his immersion in twelfth-century songs, and uttered the longing “[I wish Walter Scott were alive](#) to share them with me.”

Thanks to Romanesque and Gothic revival buildings, a stunning number of Adam’s engagements with the Middle Ages took place in the United States itself. Many pseudomedieval architectural remains that stood proudly during his lifetime have since been effaced in favor of a colonial vision in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and a classicizing one in the nation’s capital. It can be dumbfounding to discover what has been utterly erased or partially palimpsested in the recurrent destruction and re-creation of spaces, structures, and styles that take place routinely in American urbanism.



Fig. 1.9 Postcard depicting the Louisiana State Capitol, Baton Rouge, LA (Portland, ME: Hugh C. Leighton Co., early twentieth century).



Fig. 1.10 Postcard depicting the Connecticut State Capitol, Hartford, CT  
(New York: Union News Company, early twentieth century).



Fig. 1.11 The Mark Twain House, Hartford, CT. Photograph by Wikimedia user Makemake, 2005,  
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:House\\_of\\_Mark\\_Twain.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:House_of_Mark_Twain.jpg), CC BY-SA 3.0.



Fig. 1.12 Postcard depicting the Columbia Institute, Columbia, TN  
(Chicago: Curt Teich & Company, 1919).

## Gothic Harvard

In my sublimated fancy the combination of  
the glass and the Gothic is the highest ideal  
ever yet reached by men.

—Henry Adams

The stretch between Adams's college years and his resignation from the Harvard professorship corresponded to the second height of public palaver about the Gothic mania after romanticism. The heart of his tenure at the university saw the publication in 1873 of a novel entitled *The Gilded Age: A Tale of Today*. In it, Mark Twain, who was co-author along with his friend Charles Dudley Warner (Fig. 1.13), labeled his times the "[Gilded Age](#)." Adams, the not-so-public intellectual and outward-looking introvert, was fully aware of the rapier-witted Twain. Likewise, he was hypersensitive to all the fatal flaws of the historical period in which both he and his fellow wordsmith lived. The two took nostalgic turns toward the Middle Ages, away from what they regarded as the specious shimmer of affluence and glamor, the tenuous gilding, that masked the tempestuous and tumultuous world in which they dwelled. This is not to imply that Adams may have fallen in any sense under Twain's sway. What they share suggests "[concurrence rather than coincidence](#)," and their outlooks diverge forcefully in many regards. In fact, the two men differed starkly. Rudyard Kipling's oft-quoted observation that "East is East and West is West" applies in full to the relationship between the two Americans: "never the twain shall meet." (See Fig. 11.14.)



The same phase in the 1870s that got the Gilded Age underway also saw architecture in the Gothic style crest as an idiom within Harvard Yard and in its immediate vicinity. During this period, the university attained worldwide prominence in the [academic pursuit of the Middle Ages](#), with leading appointments in history, English, Romance languages, and Latin, to identify only a few key disciplines. Mediaeval architecture came hand in hand with medieval studies and a commensurate appreciation for the intellectual importance of the Middle Ages in the formation of Western languages and cultures.



Fig. 1.13 Mark Twain (left) and Charles Dudley Warner (right) during their collaboration on *The Gilded Age* in their studio in Elmira, NY. Engraving by William Harry Warren Bicknell, ca. 1899.

Published in Mark Twain and Charles Dudley Warner, *The Gilded Age*, Mark Twain Complete Works Uniform Edition, ed. Francis Bliss, vol. 10 (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1899), frontispiece.

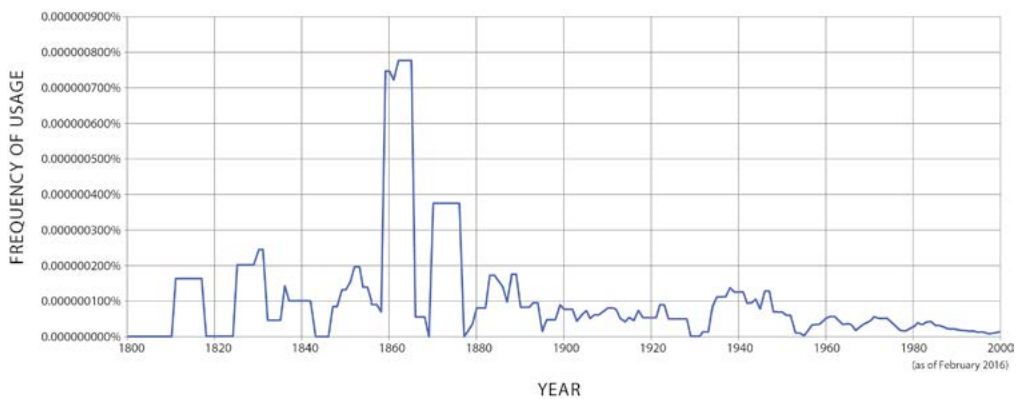


Fig. 1.14 Google Books Ngram data for “Gothic mania,” showing a pronounced spike in the 1860s. Vector art by Melissa Tandysh, 2016. Image courtesy of Melissa Tandysh. All rights reserved.

Those of us who are not degree-bearing architectural historians have remained justifiably ignorant of what could be called “Gothic Harvard” for the simple reason that from the second decade of the twentieth century, the university was systematically de-Gothicized. Abbott Lawrence Lowell, who headed the institution from 1909 to 1933, purged the institution of Gothic in favor of Georgian revival architecture. During his undergraduate studies, Adams would have logged many hours in the university library—at that time, Gore Hall, [purpose-built of granite](#) between 1837 and 1841, expanded in 1876, and demolished in 1913 to make way for the present hulking edifice (see Figs. 1.15 and 1.16). Gore Hall was termed by the novelist Henry James “a diminished [copy of the chapel of King’s College](#), at the greater Cambridge.” While still standing, it made a [deep impression](#) on many viewers. The stone simulacrum belonged to a process of drawing analogies to Old Europe. Such constructions helped to familiarize the unfamiliar—to Europeanize the United States. In the process, they gave an American expression to the [wedding of the picturesque and the Gothic](#) that has featured in such revivals since the eighteenth century.



Fig. 1.15 Gore Hall, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA. Photograph, ca. 1905. Photographer unknown. Washington, DC, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.



Fig. 1.16 Postcard depicting Gore Hall, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA (New York: Metropolitan News Co., early twentieth century).

In 1846, Edward Everett, [president of Harvard](#), designed for Cambridge, Massachusetts, the city seal and its accompanying Latin motto. Although the emblem has been overhauled slightly since its adoption, it has not been superseded despite the disappearance of the library and the tree pictured to the left of it. That growth, formerly located at the northern end of the public park known as Cambridge Common, is the so-called Washington Elm. Legend held that under this woody overhang the future head of state by this name took command of the army during the American Revolution (see Fig. 1.17). Thus, the design juxtaposes tokens of both the founding

days of the United States and what was (however strange it may sound) the height of modernity, the Gothic revival.

The relevance of Gore to civic as opposed to college identity would have been unimaginably greater than now; [the Yard](#) was not yet walled off from the circumambient community. The process that led to the demolition of Gothic structures within the heart of the campus coincided with a palpably physical assertion of a town-gown divide and a radical transformation of the relationship between buildings and landscape. The college precincts most affected became truly gated communities. Many such changes took place after the undergraduate career of Henry Adams.

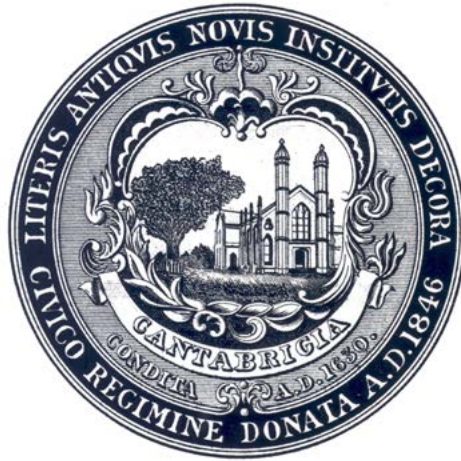


Fig. 1.17 The seal of Cambridge, Massachusetts, featuring both the Washington Elm and Gore Hall. The top half of the Latin motto translates to “Distinguished for Classical Learning and New Institutions” or “for Classical Learning, Newly Undertaken.”

When his senior year concluded in 1858 (see Fig. 1.18), Adams would have been awarded his bachelor of arts degree in a house of worship now called the [First Parish Church](#) (see Fig. 1.19). Harvard College presidents were inaugurated within it, and commencement ceremonies were held there until the 1870s. Despite the several lancet windows, the plainness today may cozen a casual viewer into assuming, quite wrongly, that the structure is in the Colonial style (see Figs. 1.20 and 1.21). On the contrary, it was then in an elaborately bedizened [Carpenter Gothic](#) (see Fig. 1.22). Only after being buffeted savagely by a thunderstorm in the early twentieth century was the building cropped of its curlicues and simplified (see Fig. 1.23). In the year of Adams’s graduation, the university built to replace it on Harvard property a monstrosity that amalgamated classical and Romanesque elements. The bizarrely eclectic [Appleton Chapel](#) stood on its own grounds for seventy-five years, until 1932 (see Fig. 1.24).



Fig. 1.18 Henry Brooks Adams. Photograph by George Kendall Warren, 1858. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University, Fogg Museum, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Henry\\_Brooks\\_Adams,\\_Harvard\\_graduation\\_photo.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Henry_Brooks_Adams,_Harvard_graduation_photo.jpg)



Fig. 1.19 First Parish Church, Cambridge, MA, as seen through Harvard's Johnston Gate. Photograph, 1900–1920. Detroit, MI, Detroit Publishing Company. Washington, DC, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.





Fig. 1.20 First Parish Church, Cambridge, MA. Photograph by Peter Alfred Hess, 2011, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:First\\_Parish\\_in\\_Cambridge\\_\(2011\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:First_Parish_in_Cambridge_(2011).jpg), CC BY 2.0.

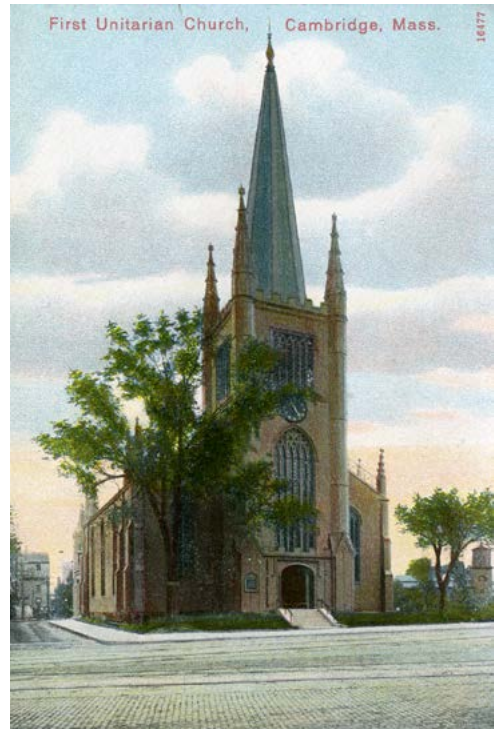


Fig. 1.21 Postcard depicting First Unitarian Church, Cambridge, MA (Boston: Reichner Bros., ca. 1906).

In 1886 the university marked its 250th anniversary. In that year, an engraving in *Harper's Weekly* feted "The Harvard Celebration: New Harvard." (See Fig. 1.25.) The top semicircle features Gore Hall. Below, a curvy box accommodates the Gothic rafters of the dining space in Memorial Hall. It is flanked on the left by the Classical-Romanesque fusion of Appleton Chapel, and on the right by the Victorian Gothic tower of Memorial Hall. To complement the supposed modernity—a largely medievaesque one—three key old buildings are represented, in the form of Harvard Hall, University Hall, and Massachusetts Hall. The foreground depicts a pacemaker of the day as he pedals a [high-wheeled bicycle](#).

Medieval was modern. Young Goths at Harvard University had encouragement for their medievalism not only from architecture but also from teachers. As a student, Adams attended lectures on Dante by James Russell Lowell (see Fig. 1.26), a poet who had succeeded none other than Henry Wadsworth Longfellow as Smith Professor of Modern Languages in 1856. Lowell stepped down from his named chair in 1874, by which point he was firmly established as a standard-bearer in American culture (see Fig. 1.27). After giving up his tenure, he continued to teach until 1877—the same year in which Adams himself resigned.





Fig. 1.22 Postcard depicting First Unitarian Church with original Gothic spires, Cambridge, MA (Boston: The New England News Company, ca. 1906).



Fig. 1.23 Postcard depicting First Unitarian Church with original Gothic spires, Cambridge, MA (Cambridge, MA: J. F. Olsson, early twentieth century).

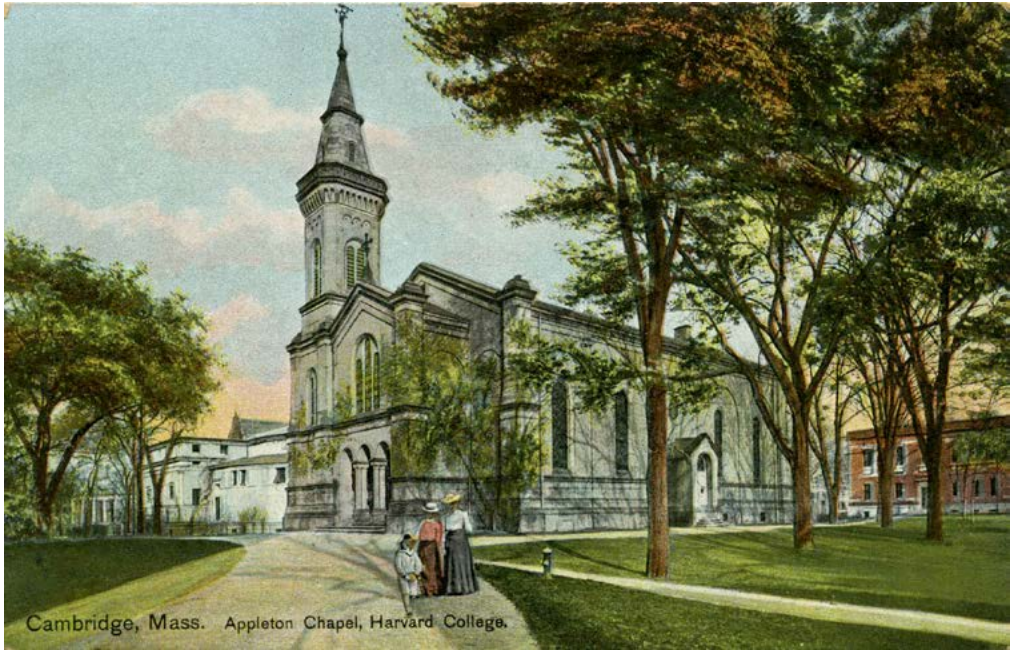


Fig. 1.24 Postcard depicting Appleton Chapel, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA  
(Portland, ME: Hugh C. Leighton Co., ca. 1910).

Lowell came by his medievalism naturally. His father had thought of christening his youngest son Perceval, and the professor-to-be himself later considered altering his name to this same chivalric one. In Arthurian legend, this knight belonged to the paladins of the Round Table. In early versions of the quest for the Grail, he was the hero, later displaced by Galahad. Not coincidentally, Lowell's first poem to achieve modest popular success was *The Vision of Sir Launfal*, a tale about the court of King Arthur that was first printed in 1848. The poet emphasized that the Middle Ages was an age of faith, and that the Gothic arch expressed faith and aspiration for heaven. Whether instruction of this sort would have predisposed students such as Adams to favor Gore Hall and the First Parish Church is not at all certain. After all, Lowell also satirized a craftsman who fabricated a humble residence in Carpenter Gothic. But in lecturing, the professor prevailed in promoting among his students a predilection for the original Gothic style. In *The Education of Henry Adams*, the author credits his former teacher with having inspired him to treasure the medieval character of preindustrial Germany.





Fig. 1.25 "The Harvard Celebration – New Harvard." Gore Hall, Annenberg Dining Hall, and Harvard Yard. Engravings by Henry Sandham, 1886. Published in *Harper's Weekly* (November 6, 1886), 721.



Fig. 1.26 James Russell Lowell. Head-and-shoulders portrait. Engraving by J. A. J. Wilcox, from original crayon in possession of Charles Eliot Norton, drawn by S. W. Rowse in 1855. Washington, DC, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

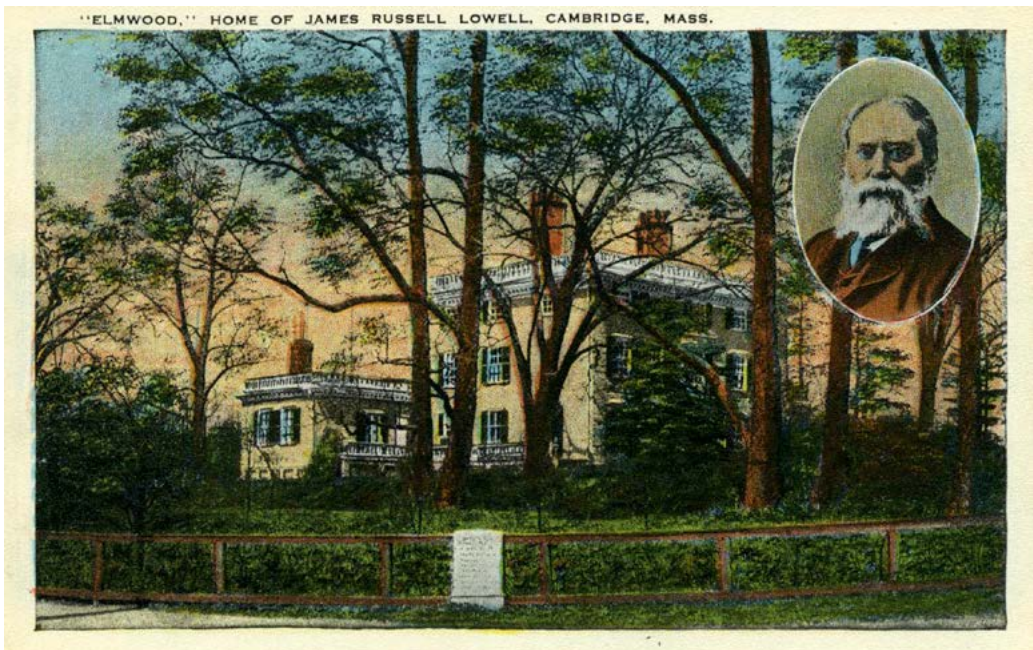


Fig. 1.27 Postcard depicting "Elmwood," the home of James Russell Lowell in Cambridge, MA (Cambridge, MA: Tichnor Bros., ca. 1930s).



During one stretch in the fall of 1869, Lowell directed his energies to composing a long poem, having been foiled in his expectation to be appointed minister to Spain. “[The Cathedral](#),” which the poet may have intended originally to entitle “A Day at Chartres,” was inspired by an excursion he had made to the French town fourteen years earlier. This soaring Gothic work was published in 1870 (see Fig. 1.28). That year, in which Adams first returned to Harvard to join the faculty, coincided with the Franco-Prussian War. The freshly minted professor does not mention the literary masterpiece but would unquestionably have known it. However odd and unlooked-for the pairing of the French church and the Ivy League university may appear today, at the time the two made a natural couple. “The Cathedral” was [published conjointly](#) with the so-called Harvard Commemoration Ode in 1877 (see Fig. 1.29). Counted among Lowell’s finest pieces of public poetry, [the composition](#) was written within a few months after the end of the Civil War and the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. From our vantage, the diptych of poems may seem implausible candidates for popularity on a scale that would warrant mass production in a petite pocketbook format, but the two pieces captured the spirit of the United States at this juncture. The country looked eastward to Europe and backward to the Middle Ages, as imagined points of solidity and solace. At the same time, the nation could not help but survey the melancholy madness of the self-inflicted internecine butchery from which it had only just emerged.

The impact of “The Cathedral” on Adams’s contemporaries can be judged from an episode in the life of Charles F. McKim (see Fig. 1.30). Most arrestingly in his contributions to the Columbian Exposition of 1893 in Chicago, this architect epitomized neoclassicism as a stark alternative to Gothic revival. Yet he too had his moments as a Goth. Younger than Adams by roughly a decade, the building designer had matriculated at Harvard University in 1866, but left it for the [School of Fine Arts](#) in France. While studying in Paris, he and fellow students once sallied forth on a [pilgrimage](#) of sorts to Chartres. After climbing one tower of the great church, they recited Lowell’s recently published “The Cathedral,” which was deemed sufficiently powerful and original to warrant such homage. It gave influential voice to a contrast between the Middle Ages and modernity that awarded the clear edge to the medieval period: “This is [no age to get cathedrals built](#).”

The title page of Lowell’s flight of Gothic fancy bears the name of the poem in pseudomedieval lettering. The initial and the publication place of Boston are rubricated. The side of paper also features a representation of the three portals of a Gothic place of worship. The engravings to accompany the opening lines of the poem proper blandish the reader to tiptoe further within the house of worship, into a phantasmagoria of arches (see Fig. 1.31). The poet characterized himself as “a happy Goth,” and the cathedral of Chartres itself as “imagination’s very self in stone.” Adams was more of a saturnine Goth, for reasons related to his temperament, the ups and downs of his life, and his take on his times, but he may well have shared various of Lowell’s perspectives on the magnificence of the French architectural gem, including the one just quoted. Both make this great church their Rosetta Stone for decoding medieval culture.

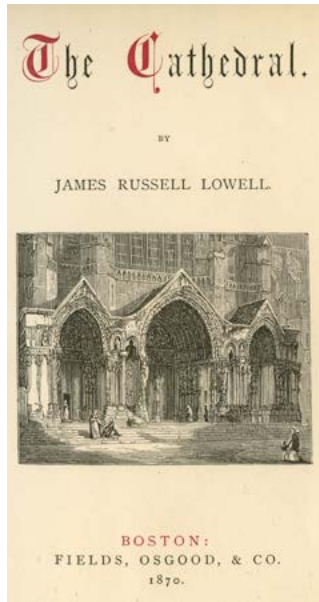


Fig. 1.28 Title page of James Russell Lowell, *The Cathedral* (Boston: Fields, Osgood, 1870).

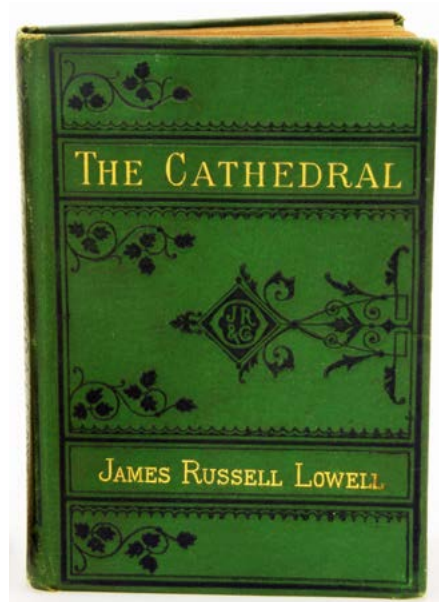


Fig. 1.29 Front cover of James Russell Lowell, *The Cathedral and the Harvard Commemoration Ode*, Vest-Pocket Series of Standard and Popular Classics (Boston: James R. Osgood, 1877).



Fig. 1.30 Charles Follen McKim. Photograph by Frances Benjamin Johnston, ca. 1880–1909. Washington, DC, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

In a letter to Henry James sent from Paris in 1903, Adams unburdens himself. He expresses the belief that the entire clubby cadre of New Englanders, or rather of Bostonians of which he formed part, “were in actual fact only one mind and nature: [the individual was a facet of Boston](#).” To bring home his point about the tribalism of his group, rare and dying breed that it was, he gives a list, in which he includes Lowell and Longfellow. His clannish segment of the Boston upper class was known traditionally as Brahmins. Whatever inbred gentility he had in common with these aristocrats, the Middle Ages were not writ large in his background. Besides, the historical era differed from the one that took shape in his own fertile mind. While in college, the historian-to-be would have had some contact with medieval literature and history, but nothing indicates that his exposure did more than scratch the surface or that it had much impact on him. He sensed all too well that his set of New England political and cultural leaders was losing, if it had not already relinquished, the predominance it had exercised until his time. For all their clubbability, they underwent retrenchment that reduced them to figureheads. The Yankee crucible in which he had been fashioned was imperiled.

In 1858, Oliver Wendell Holmes Sr. (see Fig. 1.32) coined “[hub of the solar system](#)” to describe the Massachusetts State House. The last two words in the phrase were soon reformulated more brashly and boastfully by others as “the universe.” The revised phrase became a byword for Boston as an entirety. Yet within a decade, the circumstances that enabled the city to posture itself as central inside the nation, world, and cosmos changed. Civil War and slavery ended, industrialization boomed, finance took steadily deeper root in New York City, expansion accelerated outward into the West, immigration looped in a helix upward, and measureless economic growth began, along with equally immense inequality. All these trends prevailed as Henry Adams came of age—not that he was present in the United States to witness the drama firsthand.

After graduating in the year in which Boston became the hub, Adams traveled in Europe until 1860. There he spent most of his time in Berlin and elsewhere in Germany. Intellectually, he was affected by German education and learning just as powerfully as Gaston Paris was, who studied there shortly before him. The American historian acquired no degree during his sojourn there, but like the French philologist, skills aplenty in textual criticism, exposure to the seminar system (which he helped to introduce into graduate studies at Harvard), and, perhaps most importantly, a faith in historical scholarship as a science based on documents and archives.

[Mont Saint Michel and Chartres](#) was first printed in 1904, when Adams was sixty-six years old—one year after the death of Gaston Paris. The rigor apparent in the book is not the exhaustiveness of scholarship that had been imported into American intellectual life from Germany. The pages in Adams’s volume contain nothing scientific in the sense of the German *Wissenschaft*, which translates literally as “science” but

denotes more broadly “systematic research and knowledge.” On the contrary, while searchingly intellectual and meticulously organized, the work qualifies as deeply personal and even idiosyncratic. As such, it forms an eloquent testimonial to a man whose life has been described aptly as “a search for that [education the schools could not give](#).”

Adams may have mischaracterized *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres* with more than a grain of exaggeration when he called it “[a historical romance of the year 1200](#),” rightly dissociating it from conventional narrative history. The book meditates upon the past. Yet it is simultaneously marinated in its own present day. In addition, it does not shy from far-seeing forecasts about the future. Beyond the Middle Ages, Adams theorizes that in all realms, but especially in art and religion, creative energy dissipates and civilization decays. He allows for no breezy best-case scenario.

If in his texts on American history Adams wrestles with an anxiety of influence, his greatest preoccupation may well be the model embedded in *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* by Edward Gibbon. In *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres*, Adams at once extends and alters the English historian’s argument about an erosion of civic virtue. He argues for continuity between the [fertility idols](#) of prehistoric and primitive peoples on the one hand and the art of the Middle Ages on the other. Once again, primitivism and medievalism are equated. The same equation was being drawn in art in the United States, thanks to collectors and connoisseurs such as Thomas Jefferson Bryan, whose collection included a [Madonna and Child with Saints](#). In a novelette based in part on him, the writer Edith Wharton extols his assemblage as “one of the most beautiful [collections of Italian primitives](#) in the world.”

The paradoxical qualities of *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres* may help us appreciate why Adams treated this creation of his like a beloved bastard child. They may be the reason why this book has been read far more than his other writings (excepting his autobiography). These features may also clarify why it has been spared the cakes of grime that dusty disuse has since deposited upon measureless masses of other less successful old tomes about the Middle Ages from Adams’s day, such as the once-esteemed [The Medieval Mind](#) (1911) by his medievalist colleague and former student at Harvard, the historian and legal scholar Henry Osborn Taylor (see Fig. 1.33).

The great compass and the exceptional (or exceptionalist?) character of *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres* are intrinsically and perhaps exclusively American. The study has never been translated into any other language than [French](#). If from one vantage point the author deserves to be certified as a citizen of the world, from another he is archetypally and patriotically a national of the United States. Henry James wrote the novels and talked the talk, but the other Henry—Adams—lived the life and walked the walk. He remained at his core a Bostonian and an American, no matter how far afield he roved, and no matter how widely his mind ranged.



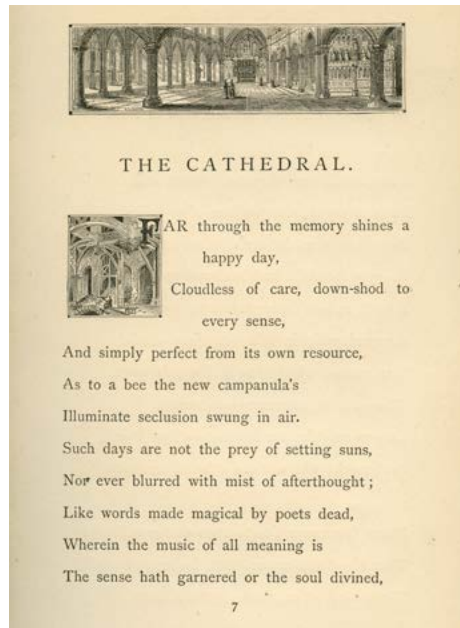


Fig. 1.31 James Russell Lowell, *The Cathedral* (Boston: Fields, Osgood, 1870), 7.



Fig. 1.32 Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr. Photograph by Josiah Johnson Hawes, ca. 1850–1856. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Library, Weissman Preservation Center, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Oliver\\_Wendell\\_Holmes\\_Sr\\_daguerreotype.jpeg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Oliver_Wendell_Holmes_Sr_daguerreotype.jpeg)



Fig. 1.33 Henry Osborn Taylor. Photograph, before 1941. Photographer unknown. New York, Columbia University Archives, Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Image courtesy of Columbia University Archives, New York. All rights reserved.

## Photographic Memory

Henry Adams did not have to be dragged kicking and screaming into the 1900s. On the contrary, he showed himself open to many innovations that the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries brought. Photography was one of them. The cathedrals, in their picturesqueness, have been camera-ready since long before the devices were invented, yet once available, the manners changed in which these churches were seen, studied, and understood. The study of the Middle Ages has never obligated professionals devoted to them to forswear the most modern gadgets or approaches. In fact, the opposite has held true from the beginning of medieval studies as a formal area of learned investigation. In the late nineteenth century, medievalists, like classicists, embraced cutting-edge research techniques. Editorial principles were only one of the newest widgets at their disposal. Beyond words, Adams's book pivots decisively into the age of durable images on light-sensitive materials. In what is now the standard edition, the first page of the preface makes [mention of a Kodak](#). *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres* methodically exploited the potential for the comparison of buildings in hard-to-reach locations that pictures made with photographic equipment accorded. By the same token, it gives signs that its author was transformed by the innovative ways of looking that arrived with the new technology.

In swiveling intellectually in this direction, Adams had the advantage of acclaimed [predecessors](#) among the originators of art history as a formal discipline. John Ruskin gave a definitive mission statement for the incorporation of photography within scholarship. To do him justice, he issued repeated, often mutually contradictory pronouncements on the topic. In one passage that began by establishing a generic hierarchy of Gothic, he ended up elevating Notre-Dame of Paris above all other expressions of the style—and promptly called for [image-based analysis](#) to hone such observations. Consistent with this proclamation, he relied upon [daguerreotypes](#) in his research. Similarly, William Morris progressed in his own interests in photos by way of lantern slides and facsimiles. In due course, the great man wrote glowingly of the architecture in [Amiens cathedral](#), in an article composed with the aid of snapshots.

Henry Adams had learned to take photographs already in the spring of 1872, in preparation for the journeys he and his wife would make on their extended honeymoon. But it took a while, for reasons of both expense and convention, for the practice to percolate into his scholarship. For example, Lowell's 1870 poem was accompanied by engravings and not photos. The two original private printings of *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres* are devoid of illustrations, apart from [diagrams](#). In contrast, the [1913 reprint](#) of the book that was overseen by Ralph Adams Cram exhibits mostly pictures cherry-picked for their utility in bringing home aspects of Gothic architecture. These images fulfill a documentary function. They are supposed to be direct records, without any intervention—no airbrushing.

Even in the private printings, many pages are studded with references that manifest the degree to which photos had displaced freehand drawings as a means of establishing a supposedly cold-eyed, firsthand, and experiential record of sights seen. Because of intimate circumstances in his life, Adams had good basis to be gruff about the art. Beyond the personal, he had intellectual objections. In fact, he developed what he called "[photo-phobia](#)" in reaction to what he regarded as inherent limitations and distortions in the medium, particularly as opposed to painting. Yet this stance of resistance did not keep him from exploiting the form for his own purposes, and even less to hamstringing others from doing so. For all his protestations, he was uniquely photocentric when compared with investigators from preceding generations.

In the nineteenth century, the discipline of historiography was fine-tuned as the numbers and stature of its practitioners burgeoned. In the refinement, archival research played an outsized role. As much as anyone, Adams perceived that personal archives of photographs had a one-of-a-kind value for facilitating recollection and evaluation as well as for helping in the hide-and-seek of historical investigation. Earlier in the nineteenth century, the spreading use of [plaster casts](#) had begun to familiarize historians of art and architecture with the utility of working from copies, initially for the needs of instruction. Similarly, the proliferation of cameras and their products accustomed scholars to the advantages of such surrogates for the purposes

of comparison and the study of evolution. These inquirers developed and perfected their own kind of photosynthesis.

Adams casts *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres* guilefully as the travelogue of an imagined itinerary to Gothic sites. He makes his trip in the company of an unnamed “niece.” This is his term for one of the companionable younger women who frequented him. Although many were in fact blood relations, others were not. To draw upon an old expression, they were kith and kin. In his pseudoavuncular stance, he assumes that such a purported relative will accompany him on his tour. Apart from a female escort, what is the womanly equivalent to a man who squires around a woman? Without fail, the niece is meant to [carry a camera](#) “and take interest in it, since she has nothing else, except her uncle, to interest her, and instances occur when she takes interest neither in the uncle nor in the journey.” In this gentle barb about the preference of his female companion for photographic hardware over all else, Adams may even intend a subtle contrast between women in the Middle Ages and in modernity. Photography supplies the acid test, by opposing the Virgin Mary and her resplendent stained glass to the supposed daughter of his sibling and the lens of her picture-taking rig.

In *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres*, the author takes portable machines with roll-film so much for granted that he twice employs “kodak” uncapitalized [as a generic term](#). The germ of this device was patented in 1881. Already by the 1890s, its convenience had changed the world every bit as much as cellphone cameras have in this century. Adams also brings home how photos have supplanted engravings as a [medium of scholarly record](#). Personal accumulations and formal archives of photographs, including printed books with reproductions that individuals and libraries could acquire, in turn became essential tools for pursuing certain avenues of investigation, such as art and architectural history. Assembling holdings of pictures was immeasurably more practical for individuals, since collections of original objects were costly even for wealthy institutions. Researchers could readily secure all the facts, not just verbal but visual too.

In his work, Adams pushed ahead with his own amassing of images. He was driven by the belief that “photographs such as those of the [Monuments Historiques](#) answer all the just purposes of underground travel.” Furthermore, comparison of such pictures had won recognition as a discovery process. Potential readers of Adams’s *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres*, in their guise as tourists who would visit the actual cathedrals he discusses, were expected to make the juxtaposition of images and realities a heuristic technique. By the end, he recommends [having in hand photos](#) and books of architectural history when touring Gothic cathedrals. Ultimately, [systematic archives](#) gained, in Adams’s eyes as well as in others’, a special cachet for the cognition and remembrance that they enabled.

In writing to [his intimate friend Elizabeth Cameron](#), Adams commented on the quantity of photographs and on the eye-watering price tag for acquiring them that

his personal collecting entailed. These efforts came above and beyond those called for to consult pictures compiled in conjunction with specific projects of other scholars and institutions. Over the past half century, hitherto-untapped resources made widely available through computing have shaken up the process of research and the provision of access to its results. So too in the corresponding decades of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a similar revolution caused radical transformations in the workings of scholarship as photography and other novel media for recording sights and sounds came into being.

On one level, Adams's book masks its earnestness and bluffs at being a kind of light guidebook for his "nieces." He assumes the posture of a convivially, albeit sometimes condescendingly, uncle-like cicerone, leading his young fellow Protestant Americans on a grand tour of the Catholic Middle Ages. One of his true nieces depicts, in [a few quick verbal brushstrokes](#), a day at Chartres when he shares his prophet-like wisdom, knowledge, and enthusiasm. On another plane, and outside the privileged eddies of those nearest and dearest to him, *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres* could fulfill the principle of noblesse oblige—it could serve as an edification, enhancement, and enticement to the ever-larger bands of less wealthy readers whose peregrinations would take place mainly through print. They might not have the means to board transatlantic steamships and sail in staterooms or even the most modest berths to Europe, but they had access to visual glories such as Chartres through expanding media of communication. These other channels ranged from the humble postcard (see Fig. 1.34) through more sophisticated products such as the stereoscopic slide.

Photographs of sights were major constituents of [armchair travel](#). Yet books were no less present than they had been in the first half of the century, when Henry Adams's boyhood perusal of Sir Walter Scott's novels molded his earliest images and impressions of the Middle Ages. In fact, economic and industrial advances assured that printed resources were available to a larger readership than ever before. For want of functional time machines, diachronic journeys have tended to necessitate immersion in texts. When primary works exist from the earlier culture under investigation, they make an unmatched starting point. Secondarily, writings from other cultures confer the benefits of comparison. The literature of scholarship constitutes a third textual corpus that can expand understanding of the past. Supplementing all three sorts of reading, Adams possessed knowledge and experience that he had earned outside the library, from travels abroad and from engagement with hosts of interlocutors and correspondents. The book of experience can be the most useful one on the shelf of life.

To some of Adams's contemporaries, the hell-for-leather pace of development in their world was disheartening, even baleful. To others, it meant the opening of opportunities. To the wisest, it signified both. Yet does apparent change correspond to the real thing? The French have a saying that has become a bromide since [its first documented use](#) in 1849: "Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose," which in English has become, "The more things change, the more they stay the same." The thought corresponds, but something still gets lost in translation.



Fig. 1.34 Postcard depicting Chartres Cathedral  
(Versailles: A. Bourdier, ca. 1896–1912).

## Reluctant Professor

Eventually Adams's self-identity as a historian in the strictest sense (see Fig. 1.35) rested upon his *History of the United States during the First Administration of Thomas Jefferson to the Second Administration of James Madison*. But when the mammoth work was completed, its author realized that the nine volumes were out of tune with the times—and with his own self. The masterpiece reflected him *as he had been in 1870*, rather than as he was in 1890.

The thousands of pages of his huge book, despite the many insights they afforded, failed to deconstruct the past and reconstruct it in ways opportune to foreseeing or fashioning the future of the country. After all, the nation was undergoing wrenching changes even as Henry Adams wrote. Larger ambitions may have kindled in him the desire to explicate America as it had been in 1800. Family history played a role, since that year had witnessed the trouncing of John Adams by Jefferson in the presidential election—but inflating the importance of that turning point in the Adamsian dynasty would be a misjudgment. *Another of the author's motivations* may have been to make sense of 1800 while it could still be discerned in the rearview mirror as he took a spin in one of many recent inventions that were transforming the world, the automobile.

Adams accepted an appointment at Harvard University at the ripe age of thirty-two, still primed to be a wunderkind, in the very year of 1870 that he singled out in corresponding with Elizabeth Cameron. The professorship offered him was not in early American but rather in medieval history. Fortuitously, but still not irrelevantly, the future incumbent was lodging at the ruins of a medieval monastery, Wenlock Abbey, when the letter arrived that invited him to take the post. At the time, Adams was not



a presumptive shoo-in for the chair in terms of his intellectual profile or past track record. He had not penned a single word on any topic bearing on the Middle Ages, and his only degree was his Harvard BA. He was recruited by Charles W. Eliot (see Fig. 1.36), who had become president of the university after Henry's father, Charles Francis Adams, had declined that post. In his autobiography, the has-been academic recounts ironically his final discussion as professor-to-be with Eliot. The tête-à-tête took place in September of 1870, after Adams had returned from Europe in the face of the Franco-Prussian war. He averred that the history of the Middle Ages was a closed book to him, but Eliot parried with a pledge: "If you will point out to me anyone who knows more, Mr. Adams, *I will appoint him.*" Outplayed, the prospective appointee tendered his acceptance.

The whole of France was soon to whirl downward in a prolonged tailspin. In contrast, Harvard benefited from the overall prosperity and confidence that distinguished the United States at that time. No better barometer can be established for the balmy breezes prevailing within American culture than to observe that in 1869 and 1870 three major art museums were founded: the Corcoran Gallery in Washington, DC, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, and the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. All three brought the art of the Middle Ages in at the ground floor. More generally, all three reflected a collective, national commitment to cultural advancement and education, an enterprise that had no more prominent and affluent expression, then or now, than at the great university in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

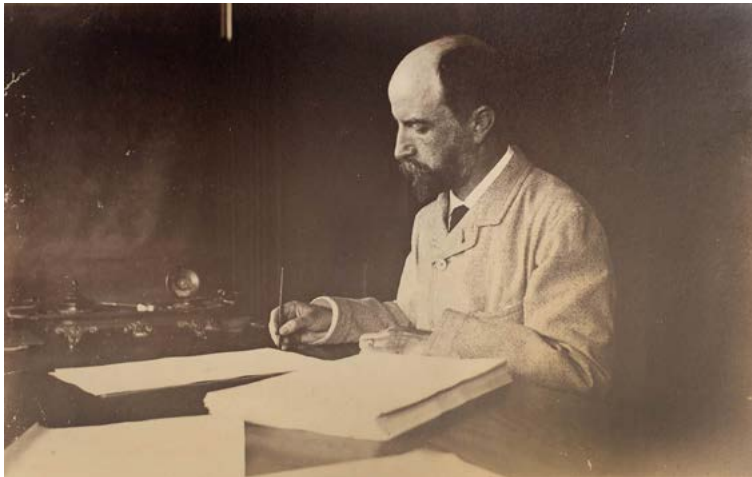


Fig. 1.35 Henry Adams. Photograph by Marian Hooper Adams, 1883. Boston, Massachusetts Historical Society, Marian Hooper Adams Photographs, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Henry\\_Adams\\_seated\\_at\\_desk\\_in\\_study,\\_writing,\\_in\\_light\\_coat,\\_photograph\\_by\\_Marian\\_Hooper\\_Adams,\\_1883.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Henry_Adams_seated_at_desk_in_study,_writing,_in_light_coat,_photograph_by_Marian_Hooper_Adams,_1883.jpg)

When Adams assumed the position as a medievalist at the university, he proclaimed to a friend that he was completely unknowledgeable, indeed “[utterly and grossly ignorant](#)” of medieval history, but nonetheless undeterred. This profession of ignorance was overplayed. At least in the honeyed hindsight of the memoirs he wrote almost exactly a half century later, he had had in 1858 a warmly positive and lyrical reaction to his very first unmediated exposure to the Middle Ages. In that year, he experienced his first European town, in the form of [Antwerp](#) (see Fig. 1.37). Although Adams overstated his dearth of knowledge, the move to the professorship at Harvard did dragoon him into embarking upon a sustained mission of self-education. In many regards, he was an amateur antiquarian where the Middle Ages were concerned. Soon he was held accountable for a thousand years of history, and taught a general survey of Europe from the tenth to sixteenth centuries.

In *The Education of Henry Adams*, Adams felt impelled to label “[Failure](#)” the chapter on his years as a Harvard faculty member. His own worst critic, and yet never lacking confidence, he could not give himself a passing mark. Not a decade after taking his professorship as if it had been potluck, he left the university to seek further education in an unexpected place, outside any institution, as a gentleman and a scholar. Initially, he remained at least in aspiration a historian, but his identity allowed and even compelled him to have other ambitions, for both power and creation.



Fig. 1.36 Charles William Eliot. Photograph by E. Chickering & Co., 1904. Washington, DC, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.





Fig. 1.37 Antwerp Cathedral. Engraving, 1855. Artist unknown. Charles A. Dana, ed., *Meyer's Universum: Views of the Most Remarkable Places and Objects of All Countries* (New York: H. J. Meyer, 1855), 6390.

## Five of Hearts

From 1870 onward, Henry Adams's career was shot through with paradoxes. Despite ostensibly shunning the public eye, he became as near to a public intellectual as the America of his times allowed—but not through cultivating ties with the media. His days of personal involvement in journalism were tapering to an end. On the contrary, he entered social bonds and correspondence with the leading lights in the politics and culture of his era. Some of these ties were spasmodic and sometimes skin-deep, but others could not have been more intimate.

In 1877, Adams moved to Washington with his spouse after resigning from Harvard. As he wiped the slate clean and made a fresh start in his life, he became one in a small clique of tight-knit friends. The so-called Five of Hearts (see Fig. 1.38) took shape in 1879. The handful counted as its members Henry Adams and his wife [Marian Hooper Adams](#) (known to familiars as Clover), the later Secretary of State John Hay and his life partner Clara Stone Hay, and the geologist Clarence King. This circle constituted the coterie of implicit readers for which he drafted letters, fiction, and history. At too rushed a glance, the fivesome could seem even more restricted than his associates among the best and the brightest at university. After all, they were all white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant, and, to boot, preponderantly New Englanders. Yet the reality was not entirely so socially and culturally monochromatic.



Fig. 1.38 The “Five of Hearts,” comprising Henry Adams, photographer Marian Hooper Adams, geologist Clarence King, Secretary of State John Hay, and his wife Clara Stone Hay. Vector Art by Melissa Tandysh, 2016. Image courtesy of Melissa Tandysh. All rights reserved.

Henry Adams’s engagement book notes that Clover and he were [first in each other’s company](#) on May 16, 1866, at a dinner party in London, when he was serving as his father’s amanuensis at the American Legation. She was on [her Grand Tour](#) with her father. Five and a half years later, the couple-to-be met more meaningfully in Cambridge at the home of Clover’s sister Ellen and her brother-in-law Ephraim Whitman Gurney. The encounter occurred not long after Henry Adams had accepted his Harvard appointment. On February 27, 1872, he proposed to his future wife, and on June 27, [they married](#), before leaving on a honeymoon down the river Nile. They made their [return voyage to America](#) in mid-August of 1873.

Coming to grips with Clover individually, with Henry and her as a twosome, and with the modulations in their relationship in the final year before her suicide is challenging. Late in her all-too-short life she became an avid photographer. Yet she left of herself exceedingly few images, either visual or verbal, that allow us much insight into her inner self. Relatively few of her many letters have survived. Her own portrait must be pieced together almost entirely from those she made of others (see Fig. 1.39). A person of no small brainpower, she was esteemed by Henry James as possessing “[a touch of genius](#).” She was widely read. Conversant in French, German, and Spanish, she had been well schooled also in Latin and Greek. At times, she served her husband as an unpaid and unacknowledged research assistant. At least while they were abroad, she pitched in to lend a hand in the drudgework of his scholarly endeavors. More important was her social contribution. At home in Washington, she had as a hostess a flair for badinage that helped to make their home a hub of the beau monde in the city.

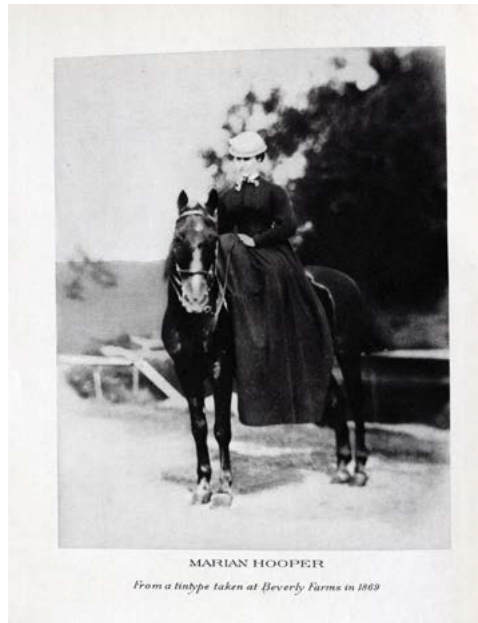


Fig. 1.39 Marian Hooper. Photograph, 1869. Photographer unknown. Published in Ward Thoron, ed., *The Letters of Mrs. Henry Adams*, 1865–1883 (Boston: Little, Brown, 1936), frontispiece.

Of the other couple in the Five of Hearts, Clara Stone Hay, born into an exceedingly wealthy family in Ohio, looks to have been as stolid in character as embonpoint in physique. Tight-laced, without the flair as a writer that the other four possessed, she seems the odd person out. In contrast, her husband John had shown from an early age a way with words that in time he matched with a worldly wisdom. The two qualities go a long way in explaining why he had a close rapport with another American who had come of age along the Mississippi, Mark Twain. John figured among Adam's closest friends and became his next-door neighbor. Heeding the realtors' mantra "Location, location, location," the two families could not have deposited themselves any nearer the seat of power without filling it themselves: they resided in Lafayette Square, directly across from the White House. The original edifice was a double house that Hay and Adams commissioned together (see Fig. 1.40). The smaller portion of the structure belonged to Adams. It was the western home that faced Lafayette Park. [The larger part](#) was occupied by the statesman Hay and his family. Today, the Hay-Adams luxury hotel, built in 1928, covers the lot where their homes once stood.

In keeping with an Adamsian tradition of filial service, Henry had assisted as right-hand man to his father in England during the Civil War. Yet that employment was private: he never held public office or served the government. Still, thanks both to his illustrious name and even more to his relationship with John Hay, he enjoyed extraordinary access to the inner workings and levers of American power (see Fig. 1.41). It might be tempting to view Adams as basking in the reflected glory of these

wheelings and dealings. After all, his friend was adjacent to a heady succession of chief executives. As a very young man, Hay (who had been raised in Indiana and Illinois) was appointed a secretary to Abraham Lincoln. Later, he was one of the longest-serving Secretaries of State. His service under both Presidents William McKinley and Theodore Roosevelt enabled or even obliged him to make an imprint on US diplomacy that remains unparalleled. Since his forte was foreign policy rather than domestic public affairs, it would be going too far to call Hay a kingmaker. The politics of the times was as much a free-for-all as ever, but the statesmanly Hay managed to stay largely unmarked and untainted. Such was his intimacy with national chieftains that he kept watch by the bedsides of both Lincoln and McKinley when they died after being wounded by assassins. Coincidentally, but not irrelevantly, Hay's only break from lifelong public service came in a [five-year stint as a journalist](#) in New York, which overlapped roughly with Adams's appointment at Harvard University.

The last of the five was the swaggering and swashbuckling Clarence King (see Fig. 1.42), a Yale graduate raised in Rhode Island, Connecticut, and Massachusetts. His panache made a deep impact upon Hay and Adams—the former even named a son Clarence after this friend. Beyond being intelligent and inventive, King had a vitality and derring-do that they admired. He earned admiration as a frontiersman of formidable energy, a mountaineer of proven mettle, and a raconteur of the first rank. Especially in view of his expertise as a prospector, he can be read metaphorically in hindsight as a high-carat diamond in the rough. However, when we put the loupe to our eyeball and peer closely, the quality cut of the precious stone stands out less than do the unpolished edges.



Fig. 1.40 Hay-Adams residences, N.W. corner of 16th and H. Streets, Washington, D.C. Unknown photographer, 1885. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

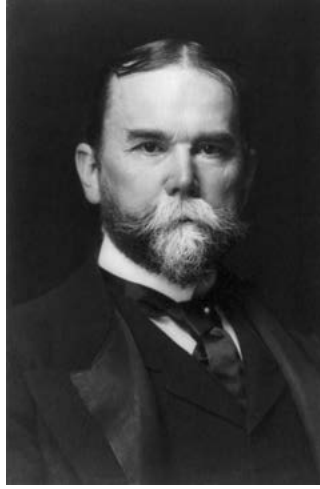


Fig. 1.41 John Hay. Photograph by Hollinger & Rockey, ca. 1897. Washington, DC, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

King's triumphs as a prospector and surveyor culminated in his appointment as the first head of the United States Geological Survey. In 1881, he resigned from that post and never returned to government employment. Most memorably, he grabbed headlines by exposing an attempted flimflam. The swindle involved gemstones that had been planted to deceive potential investors. Yet after the early *éclat* from the great diamond hoax of 1872, his promise flatlined. Over the long run, he drew a blank and failed to deliver in all his own ventures.

When King died, the insolvency of his estate made clear how far short of the mark he had fallen in business. Compounding the downward whorl of financial collapse, the conduct of his personal affairs would have shocked the Five of Hearts, had all his intimates known even a little of the double life he led. Hay and Adams (although to a much lesser extent and capacity) felt obliged as men of honor to cover their friend's debts. The money was the least of the posthumous scandal that they paid to hush.

Under the false name of James Todd, King had conducted a sham marriage and shadow existence. Although white and blue-eyed, he passed himself off as a railroad worker of African-American ancestry. In this guise, he entered common-law marriage with a woman in Brooklyn who in the parlance of the times was a Negress. The two had a public wedding of sorts. Todd hoodwinked his partner into thinking that he was of her race but light-skinned, and [he fathered five children by her](#). All the while, King concealed this side of his world from all his Caucasian acquaintances. Could he have done more? Should he have been braver? Anti-miscegenation legislation had criminalized interracial marriage in many states. Even absent such laws, social views ran strongly against unions between the races. King had every reason to keep quiet about his liaison, and after his death his friends paid dearly to keep what was then dirty laundry from being aired.



Fig. 1.42 Clarence King. Photograph, ca. 1882–1884. Photographer unknown.  
Published in Clarence King, *Memoirs: The Helmet of Mambrino*  
(New York, London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1904), 37.



## Self-Made Medievalist

The American mind might go back to Puritanism or to William Penn, but it lacked that which preceded them; it lacked the Middle Ages. It was in the position of a man who has never known his mother. The American conquest of the Middle Ages has something of that romantic glamor and of that deep sentimental urge which we might expect in a man who should set out to find his lost mother.

—Ernst Robert Curtius

Henry Adams followed his paternal grandfather, John Quincy Adams, to a teaching post at Harvard. The latter served a spell as the first [Boylston Professor of Rhetoric and Oratory](#), while the former held a professorship in medieval history. Henry lasted at the university for only seven years, however, retiring early, in 1877, not a long way into his forties. His next step was to return to the District of Columbia, in a hunt for greater personal freedom. Initially, he chose to pursue without encumbrance his investigation of early nineteenth-century America. The move was a gamble, staked partly on personal ambition and partly on faith in the future of Washington, DC. In a trice, the capital grew from a dream into a reality (see Fig. 1.43). Adams may well have wagered that the city would become the center of mass within the United States of America not only for affairs of state and politics, but also for culture and what we might call “soft power.” In this case his bet would have paid off only modestly. Metropolises such as New York and Chicago, in the first stages of becoming the megalopolises they are today, won out at the expense of Boston and Washington.

Fully two decades later, vicissitudes propelled Henry Adams to steep himself in the twelfth century as he had never done before. Despite being surrounded by friends and so-called nieces, he felt cut off from society. An emotional solitude born of his own unique personal circumstances was compounded by an intellectual malaise shared by many others at the fin de siècle over the political and technological transformation of the country and world in which he had grown up. His reaction to feeling out of touch and isolated was to look back more than one half millennium earlier and to [brush up on his medieval history](#). He closed a letter at the time by relating his immersion in the Middle Ages only half-jokingly to his [rejection of institutionalized instruction](#) and even political institutions in his own day.

In *The Education of Henry Adams*, its author described the years at the turn of the century as [collective stagnation](#). In his eyes, the world and its social structure appeared to be [spalling and splintering](#). Yet if concord could not be reinstated, it was not for want of seeking out in the past a golden age, and endeavoring to renew or imitate it. Politics of personal identity, sexual gender, and social class tore at the very seams

of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These relations were apparently thought to have been less fraught in the Middle Ages; as a result, the medieval period stirred [enthusiastic nostalgia](#). But nostalgia is too facile a word and escapism too simple a concept to capture Adams's multifactorial attitudes toward the Middle Ages as he envisaged them.

The famous *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres* brings to long-deferred fruition its author's largely autodidactic endeavor of rendering himself into a medievalist. Note well that he embarked upon the research and writing of it only in 1897, fully twenty years after he stepped down from Harvard. The book draws together immeasurable learning, not only in his home field of history but also in such others as literature (epic, legend, and miracles), art (iconography), and religion. The extent of Henry Adams's socializing and social network or of his traveling should not fool us into downplaying how flat out he toiled throughout his life as a thinker and researcher, whether when employed professionally as such or instead in a self-determined capacity (think independent scholar of independent means). The prodigious tally of pages he poured forth across the decades, and the gamut of learning they certify, offer copious evidence of his self-imposed discipline. This would be the scholarly "sit power" that by antithesis is elevated in German as *Sitzmacht*. In idiomatic English, he studied until he went cross-eyed.



Fig. 1.43 Bird's-eye view of the Capitol, Washington, D.C.  
Lithograph by E. Sachse & Co., 1871.

Part of the peculiar rapture that comes to the fore in *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres* stems from the ambition of its writer to make sense of an entire era through the node of religion and art. One factor that precipitated or catalyzed the book was the ten-day sweep of French cathedrals in Normandy and Reims, Amiens, Rouen, Le Mans, Chartres, and Paris that he had made in 1895. The actual tour forms the background of his book (the imagined trip with the anonymous “niece” occupies the foreground). We should recall that *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres* had the half-title *Travels—France*, just as his *Memoirs of Marau Taaroa* bore the further specification *Travels—Tahiti*. Only much later, in *The Education of Henry Adams*, did both title and half-title fall by the wayside, when he subtitled the book instead “A Study of Thirteenth-Century Unity.”

Adams took the outing with Henry Cabot Lodge, his wife Anna, and their two sons. Already as an undergraduate at Harvard, this long-term friend had been a follower of Adams’s. Later, he labored alongside his former professor in redacting the *North American Review*. The masthead of this literary journal, founded in Boston in 1815, was at many points in the nineteenth century a glittering who’s who of the New England intelligentsia. After receiving his law degree from the same university, Lodge earned a PhD, writing under Adams’s supervision his doctoral dissertation on Anglo-Saxon government. At the time of the journey in France, the former student had been a Republican senator from Massachusetts since 1893 (see Fig. 1.44).



Fig. 1.44 Henry Cabot Lodge. Photograph by James E. Purdy, ca. 1901. Washington, DC, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

While holding the professorship at Harvard, Adams had devoted most of his scholarly attention as a historian of the Middle Ages to the Old English or Anglo-Saxon period. His undergraduate lecturing roved far more unconstrainedly across time, and as he pieced together his arguments in *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres*, he drew upon that self-education that he had acquired in preparing for those general courses. At the

same time, the book rested on much broader, more cosmopolitan knowledge than of nineteenth-century United States and medieval France alone. Adams was relatively stationary only during his marriage to Clover, when he did no real traveling apart from their post-wedding vacation and one other trip to Europe. After her suicide, he scoured the world for solace, distraction, and enlightenment. In this phase, he made extensive voyages to Japan, Hawaii and the South Seas, Mexico, and Egypt, in addition to many stays in Britain and on the European continent. He thought deeply about the emergence of his own nation, under the guidance of his own ancestors. Still more profoundly, he deepened his investigations into the *interplay* among the forces of science, faith, and art across the millennia, from before the Middle Ages down to his own present.

Likewise, his younger brother, the historian Brooks Adams (see Fig. 1.45), had been stirred by the stained glass and stone arches of a French cathedral to an experience of religious conversion that bordered on ecstasy. In *The Law of Civilization and Decay* and other tirades, he presented civilization as having moved steadily westward, from Constantinople, to Venice, Amsterdam, and London, and finally to the New York of his day. Yet the occidental movement was not always progress. No optimist or meliorist, but rather the opposite, he saw wealth as entailing almost inevitably a loss of spirit and creativity. For such views, Brooks has been considered an “*alienated patrician*,” as have others, such as his elders Henry and Harvard University art historian Charles Eliot Norton. The term designates a pedigreed and perhaps even overbred northeastern who deeply distrusted the directions in which arrivistes and immigrants of the postbellum were driving the United States.



Fig. 1.45 Peter Chardon Brooks Adams. Photograph, ca. 1910. Photographer unknown, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Brooks\\_Adams,\\_c.\\_1910.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Brooks_Adams,_c._1910.jpg)

To such men, the past of the Middle Ages had many attractions. In the thinking of both Adams siblings, medieval civilization was marked by imagination, faith, and courage, all of which had degenerated in modern times. Without necessarily recognizing or expressing the realization, Henry, Brooks, and other historicizing Americans of their era advocated for the achievement across time of what the doctrine of Manifest Destiny had accomplished across space. They wanted the United States to lay hold of the whole past and to drink it in—and so, with a thirst to master culture along with all else the world had to offer, their growing country took deep drafts from bygone European centuries. After re-creating Greece and Rome in its image in the Federal Period, America made the Middle Ages and Renaissance its own in the rest of the nineteenth century.

Henry Adams himself had also, of course, been exposed to cathedrals, Romanesque, Gothic, and neo-Gothic, the last-mentioned in the New World as well as the Old. The opening words of his novel *Esther* refer to “the new church of St. John’s, on Fifth Avenue.” New York City in fact owned a goodly supply of Gothic revival houses of prayer, such as Saint Thomas’s Church, Grace Church (see Fig. 1.46), and Trinity Church (see Fig. 1.47), all of them at the time on Broadway. Yet locating St. John’s in Manhattan was a red herring or novelistic license. Adams’s fictitious place of worship was modeled on the real-life Trinity Church in a different city, namely Boston. During his time at Harvard, Clover and he lived in a four-story brownstone in the city across the river. Their address was only a few blocks from the construction site of this Episcopal house of God, which was designed by his friend, the architect Henry Hobson Richardson. The building was consecrated on February 9, 1877.

The expedition to cathedrals in France in 1895 took place when Henry Adams was a few years shy of sixty. Despite his age and worldly experience, he found shattered all presumptions of familiarity and understanding about Gothic and the Middle Ages that he had had. On the circuit with the Lodges, Adams was moved by great churches to a fever pitch. He was left wondering why for four decades he had failed to open his senses to their beauty and spirituality. To the niece of his dead wife, Adams dashed off a missive in which he drew a droll analogy between his peers and the grotesque demons carved into the stones of the cathedral of Coutances. Nothing could be further from the traditional trope of the dwarf standing on the shoulders of a giant.

Far more revealing and rosier is a letter to John Hay that Adams posted less than a week later from Paris. In it he made an extraordinary profession of his belief that his character was rooted ineradicably in the faith and architecture of the Normans in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The effusion discloses much about the identity politics of the nineteenth century, which were rooted in the medieval past. He identified himself atavistically not with Anglo-Saxons but rather with their Norman conquerors. For most of the nineteenth century, Americans cast about for the predecessors on whom most aptly to model themselves in their ethnogenesis. They needed antecedent



ethnic groups that they could mold into forebears who suited their self-conceptions and ambitions. One option was the Goths. In 1843, a Vermont-based independent scholar lectured on "[The Goths in New England](#)." In his disquisition, this lawyer and diplomat sought to trace the nobility of the Puritans to the Germanic people from whom they descended. He also drew up an equation. As this tribe had been to the Romans in their decline, so the immigrants to the United States were to the failing monarchs of England. The analogy was explicitly racial: "The Goths, the common ancestors of the inhabitants of North Western Europe, are the noblest branch of the Caucasian race. We are their children."

The most common choice of a past ethnic group to take as the constituent that made Americans Americans was the [Anglo-Saxons](#). [Across the Atlantic](#) in Great Britain, views were split. The so-called Norman yoke theory posited that upon invading in 1066, William the Conqueror sullied through the venality of his race what had been a kind of prelapsarian paradise of egalitarianism. A more positive, contrary take on the conquest was that eventually Great Britain acquired a unique brawn through the melding of Anglo-Saxon and Norman virtues and cultures.



Fig. 1.46 Postcard depicting Grace Church, New York (New York: The American Art Publishing Co., 1910).



Fig. 1.47 Postcard depicting Trinity Church, New York (New York: Lumitone Photo Print, early twentieth century).

In the United States, Anglo-Saxonism became a determinant of a romantic racial nationalism that served to warrant national leaders and their hangers-on who laid claim through exceptionalism to the prerogatives of Manifest Destiny. This American sense of providence asserted itself initially in the grand sweep from Atlantic to Pacific coast and from the forty-ninth parallel north to the present-day boundary with Mexico. In part an ideology of racial superiority, this outlook contributed to attitudes that justified the subjugation of first the native Americans, then the Mexicans, and finally other ethnic groups in the adventurism of the Spanish-American War and other such actions. White fragility lay far in the future, but the volcanology of color issues can be traced already in the double life of Clarence King.

Early in the twentieth century, Adams's *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres* was likewise a search for origins that rested in part on an assumption of shared race between a people of the Middle Ages and a subset of Americans. As Ernst Robert Curtius posited in 1949, "It is obvious that [Henry Adams was led to northern France](#) by the instinct of his race. He was trying to get at the roots of the civilization to which he belonged." But the quest led to a different ethnic group from the Goths, of course. The bloodline Henry Adams saw as particularly relevant to his social set was a different Germanic people. [The Normans](#) were "hard-headed and practical... realistic rather than romantic."

As a folk, Americans are all of immigrant descent, apart from the relatively few pure indigenes who survive—and even the last-mentioned ultimately came from elsewhere. Consequently, the people of the United States seem prey to yearnfulness or fantasized homesickness for imagined and idealized home countries and heritages. Henry Adams held the highest rank among citizens of his supposedly pedigree-less country. Yet even he was subject to this wistfulness for an ancestral home. Such pining did not prevent him from hoping, in the inquietude of his international gallivanting, that the glory days of his nation might not lie entirely behind him. He may have convinced himself that by immersing themselves in a refashioned Middle Ages, his countrymen might find the counterweight to their perilous and precarious modernity.

Subsequently, Adams made various other forays into the natural habitat of Gothic. Some of these visits he paid with [John La Farge](#), who led him to a deeper appreciation for medieval stained glass (see Fig. 1.48). [Already as an undergraduate](#), the future artist had been mentored by a Middle Ages-loving professor of English literature who had studied at Oxford University. Under this man's direction, La Farge "was made or allowed to read anything that would bring up the [beauty of the medieval ideal](#)." Thereafter, he remained long under the enchantment of the Oxford Movement, John Ruskin, and the Middle Ages. In an era when the making of colored glass became an industry and big business in America, La Farge was a career-long [rival of Louis Comfort Tiffany](#). More owing to industrial technique and the mass production it facilitated than to sheer artistry, his competitor's products remain down to the present better known and more famous. Who does not know what a Tiffany lamp is, but how many have heard of La Farge?

For a long while Adams handled *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres* as if it were a jeu d'esprit, [printing it privately](#) twice. To view the matter from a different perspective, he limited the circulation of the book as [an act of homage](#) to its moving force and spirit, Mary. Not without cause, he referred in a letter to his study as "[my great work on the Virgin](#)." *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres* brought forth an idiosyncratic trinity, in its hybridity of architecture, cultural history, and confessional. The final paragraph says it all, but here the cascading syntax of one sentence will have to suffice:

[The peril of the heavy tower](#), of the restless vault, of the vagrant buttress; the uncertainty of logic, the inequalities of the syllogism, the irregularities of the mental mirror,—all these haunting nightmares of the Church are expressed as strongly by the gothic cathedral as though it had been the cry of human suffering, and as no emotion had ever been expressed before or is likely to find expression again.

Only in 1913 did Adams take the last resort of permitting the first public edition, almost a decade after the initial run of two private printings that he subsidized fully out of his own funds. From this point on, the book [stayed in print](#) throughout the twentieth century.

Near the heart of the volume stands Adams's recapitulation of *Our Lady's Tumbler*. His attraction to the poem calls us to look at his life and loves. For all his atypicality, he typifies much about the New World in his day. As we have seen, he sums up quite unintentionally odd angles of its fixation with race and religion and of its concurrent fascinations with old texts and new technologies. At the same time, his passion for the story of the medieval dancer reveals larger truths that we will soon encounter about the relationships between the Middle Ages and modernity as well as between Europe and America, as embodied in Paris and Washington.



Fig. 1.48 John LaFarge. Photograph by James E. Purdy, 1903. Image uploaded to Wikimedia Commons by Julian Felsenburgh (2014), [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Portrait\\_of\\_John\\_LaFarge.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Portrait_of_John_LaFarge.jpg)



## 2. Our Lady's Tumbler in Mont Saint Michel and Chartres

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### The Nature of the Book

*Mont Saint Michel and Chartres* is most unusual. It could be taken as a guidebook to a different place and time. If so, is it meant as a manual for armchair or actual travel? Then again, it is no documentary or travelogue on traipsing from abbeys to cathedrals in France. Rather, the volume comprises as much melancholic mysticism as objective science, as much personal meditation as detached scholarship. It is a paean, but it leaves the reader to puzzle out to what—to the long-lost worlds of the Middle Ages, to the more recently vanished ones of the nineteenth century, or to both as one?

In creating the distinctive fabric of his publication, Adams interwove reflections upon a few major topics. One was the evolution from Romanesque to Gothic architecture. Far more than fully developed Gothic, this cardinal moment of transition seized his heart. Another was the swivel from military ideals associated with Saint Michael to Marianism of the twelfth century and beyond. A third was Thomistic theology, that is, the nature of God as studied by Thomas Aquinas, the thirteenth-century Italian Dominican. Last, but not least, came medieval French verse, as presented in the American's own translations. Strikingly, more than one quarter of his whole study concentrates upon the [literature of France in the Middle Ages](#).

In the twelfth chapter, Adams lavishes especial time and care upon two texts. One is a late thirteenth-century poem by Adam de la Halle, which contains Picard dialect. Customarily entitled today *Jeu de Robin et Marion* (The play of Robin and Marion), it is generally regarded as the [earliest piece of French secular theater](#) with music. It is often designated as a proto-comic opera. The other is the early thirteenth-century *Aucassin et Nicolette*. In alternating sections of verse and prose, this self-proclaimed *chantefable* or “song-tale” is extant in a single manuscript with Picard dialectal features. The work unfolds an elaborate narrative about the love of Aucassin, a French nobleman, for Nicolette, a Saracen maiden. The cross-cultural tale enjoyed a vogue in the fin de siècle. It was [translated](#) first into modern French in a version illustrated with plates,



accompanied by the original text as revised and introduced by Gaston Paris, and subsequently, it was put into English repeatedly in the 1880s and 1890s.

Adams's crown jewel of a book was not published until 1904. Fascinatingly, the anonymous preface to Thomas B. Mosher's 1900 pirated printing of *Our Lady's Tumbler* draws a substantial contrast between it and *Aucassin et Nicolette*. The comparison has the effect of disfavoring the story about the jongleur. All the same, the foreword concludes with the backhanded compliment that the "[lack of human passion](#)... is made up by the spiritual fervor of the poor mirth-maker who after all was perhaps nearer and dearer to the Middle Age heart than the more celebrated old-time lovers."

The tale of the tumbler has no explicit connection with either of the sites spelled out in the title of *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres*. Nonetheless, Adams sees the poem as a monument to "[the majesty of Chartres](#)." For him, the keynote of the Middle Ages consisted in the stretch from the eleventh through the thirteenth centuries. In his reading of the epoch, these three hundred years or so [witnessed an evolution](#) from the soft-spoken simplicity and strength of Romanesque, through the dapper refinement of the transitional style, all the way to the rational modernity of Gothic. Although the quondam professor of medieval history has been presented as an antimodernist, or rather as an [antimodern modernist](#), his medievalism actually rested upon a conviction that the Middle Ages as embodied in Gothic culture in general and architecture in particular possessed a modernity all of its own.

Finding the verse story of the minstrel infallibly consonant with the achievements of Chartres cathedral, Adams lards his investigation with long swatches from the original French that he put into English. He also freely rewords the portions that he omitted from word-for-word translation. His thirteenth chapter, with the title "Les Miracles de Notre Dame," is dedicated to the depiction of Marian miracles in the literature of France in the Middle Ages. It reaches a crescendo in his retelling of *Our Lady's Tumbler*. He even allows the piece of poetry to have nearly [the last word](#) in this division of his book. Once *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres* matured into a must-read bestseller in the United States, the salience of the medieval poem in it would have brought the tale to the notice of many prospective readers.

In the summation of the thirteenth chapter, Adams connects the French verse with Gothic architecture. In fact, he sets the stage for drawing this equivalency earlier in the study, when he characterizes the great church of Chartres as a [toy house](#) for the Queen of Heaven. The novelist and architect Horace Walpole had conceived of the Gothic style in similarly ludic terms, and the convention of likening products in it to playthings had not evaporated in the meantime. We have seen it in the nineteenth-century vogue for bric-a-brac and bibelots. The whole cathedral is tantamount to the routine offered by the tumbler, just as Mont Saint Michel concretized in architecture what the *Song of Roland* voiced in poetry. Adams does not extend the similitude, by likening the taut energy of the columns within a vast Gothic church or the solid but soaring quality of the buttresses outside such a structure to the controlled dynamism of an acrobat's performance—but he might well have done so.

How had Adams become aware of *Our Lady's Tumbler*? To say nothing of printings in London, English versions of the medieval French were [issued repeatedly](#) at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries in Boston, Massachusetts, and Portland, Maine. In New England and beyond, the tale earned unmistakable approval among a much larger readership than merely scholars. On both sides of the Atlantic, Gaston Paris was known as broadly as the poem he had extolled. The noted French philologist enjoyed no small esteem among educated Americans. Indeed, his stature was so eminent among English speakers that his next sketch of the medieval literature of France was translated in 1903, the year of his death. By a curious turn of events, [the English came into print](#) four years before the French itself was published.

Adams shared fully the high estimation of the French savant, whom he considered ["the greatest academic authority in the world."](#) The American was particularly well acquainted with the literary historian's *French Literature in the Middle Ages*. He refers glowingly to it in *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres* and [in his correspondence](#). A heavily scored copy in the original language is still extant from [his personal library](#). Even in the unlikely event that Adams had not happened upon an exemplar of *Our Lady's Tumbler* in one or another translation, he would have had exposure to the medieval poem from an epigrammatic mention of it in Gaston Paris's sounding of medieval literature.

The ["philological items"](#) in Adams's library comprehended various editions of Marian miracles in French that remain fundamental even today. That said, his holdings do not extend to complete journals or offprints from them with the articles, such as especially the edition by Foerster in *Romania*, that presented the actual medieval text of *Our Lady's Tumbler*. For most such specialized materials, Adams could have consulted major libraries in Paris or the United States. Although various other research collections would have contained most of them too, occasionally he had items dispatched to him on loan from Harvard to Washington. The university library was growing by leaps and bounds, a circumstance particularly congenial to *Our Lady's Tumbler*.

Harry Elkins Widener (see Fig. 2.1), a Harvard alumnus (class of 1907) and avid book collector, perished in the wee hours of April 14, 1912, along with more than 1,500 women, men, and children—passengers and crew members—when the liner *RMS Titanic*, on its maiden voyage en route from Liverpool to New York, struck an iceberg and sank four hundred miles off the coast of Newfoundland. The notoriously tragic shipwreck seems to have precipitated, or at least contributed to, the apoplexy that Henry Adams suffered ten days later. The dead in the catastrophe included many "noted names" with whom he was connected (see Fig. 2.2). Beyond that fact, for the outbound portion of his annual expedition to Paris, he had booked a cabin on what was to have been the vessel's return voyage back across the Atlantic. With his blood pressure no doubt spiking, he contemplated what his fate would have been if he had lain in his berth that night. He exclaimed to his frequent correspondent Elizabeth Cameron: "By my blessed Virgin, it is awful. This Titanic blow shatters one's nerves. [We can't grapple it.](#)" The loss of the vessel and its people jolted Adams's very

worldview. To him, the power of the dynamo, steel, and coal compensated for a world without faith in Mary. Yet a floating crag of ice exposed the fatal weakness of trusting in such potential when it buckled the hull plates of a supposedly unsinkable ocean liner. In other words, the accident brought home the hubris and the limits of modern technology.



Fig. 2.1 Harry Elkins Widener. Engraving by W. T. Bother, 1918. Published in James E. Homans, *The Cyclopædia of American Biography*, vol. 8 (New York: The Press Association Compilers, Inc., 1918), between pp. 342 and 343, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Harry\\_E.\\_Widener.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Harry_E._Widener.jpg)



Fig. 2.2 "J. J. Astor Lost on Titanic: 1,500 to 1,800 Dead." Front page headline of *New York American*, April 16, 1912, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Titanic\\_Headline.jpeg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Titanic_Headline.jpeg)

Since the Titanic had not yet sunk to the seabed when Henry Adams wrote *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres*, Harvard College had not yet erected the edifice to commemorate its lost alumnus and bibliophile. The Memorial Library, funded by a bequest from his grief-stricken mother, was dedicated in honor of Harry Elkins Widener only in 1915. Even so, in Adams's time the library in Gore Hall already held the English translation as well as the original of Gaston Paris's book, alongside all the abstruse philological journals in which editions and proposed textual improvements of the medieval text had appeared.

In *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres*, Adams opines that the recently printed *Our Lady's Tumbler* has met with more success in his day than it did in the Middle Ages "for it appeals to a quiet sense of humor that pleases modern French taste as much as it pleased the Virgin." Though he leaves his contemporary from across the Atlantic unnamed, he diagnoses in the medieval poem a gentle irony that accounted for much of the popularity from which Anatole France benefited at the time. Adams's wife Clover had become [attuned early](#) to the fiction writer and had read his novel *The Crime of Silvestre Bonnard*. Although the American historian makes in his letters no specific reference to *Le jongleur de Notre Dame*, in correspondence he [betrays an easy familiarity](#) with France's oeuvre in general. For all these reasons, [Adams's observation](#) about the appeals of a tale from the Middle Ages surely alludes obliquely to the affectionate wit of the late nineteenth-century retelling in which the French author adapted the gist of the medieval story into one very much his own.

## Madonna of Medieval France, La Dona of Washington

Adams drafted much of *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres* in Paris, a European cultural capital at more than an ocean's remove from Boston, Cambridge, and Washington, in the closing years of the nineteenth and opening ones of the twentieth century. When plying his scholarly trade in the City of Light for extended periods of time, he was often ensconced there in an apartment that belonged to the woman most important to him in the last three decades of his life.

Née Elizabeth Sherman, "Lizzie" Cameron was the niece of William Tecumseh Sherman, a famed general in the Union Army during the American Civil War. In other notable family connections, she was the daughter of a judge in Ohio and a niece of a secretary of the Treasury. A belle, she was widely regarded as the most seductive and cerebral woman of her day in Washington. Sultriness in both beauty and character come through in the portrait of her made in 1900 by the Swedish artist Anders Zorn, as well as in photographs (see Fig. 2.3). As a very young woman, she was steered by her parents into an alliance of their design. Her life partner in this arranged marriage, Senator James Donald ("Don") Cameron (see Fig. 2.4), was a widower with six children. The couple was anything but a match made in heaven. She was by all accounts stunning and vivacious, in those regards an ideal trophy wife. And the

legislator? Could the perquisites of wealth and power, sometimes overvalued in men, have outweighed his well-earned reputation for being uncouth and an alcoholic? He was much older than she, and the disparity in age might have played a role. Whatever the reason, the husband and wife did not love each other.



Fig. 2.3 Anders Zorn, *Portrait of Elizabeth Sherman*, 1900. Oil on canvas, 147.3 × 113.3 cm. Private collection, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Portrait\\_of\\_Elizabeth\\_Sherman\\_Cameron\\_by\\_Anders\\_Zorn.jpeg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Portrait_of_Elizabeth_Sherman_Cameron_by_Anders_Zorn.jpeg)



Fig. 2.4 James Donald Cameron. Photograph by Matthew Brady, ca. 1875–1880. Washington, DC, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Brady-Handy Collection.



Through her appearance and personality, Elizabeth Cameron could and did wrap men around her finger. She was a serial heartbreaker. After becoming estranged from her spouse, she trifled with many admirers, both married and not. Still, she never went so far as to conduct public dalliances that would sully her reputation. She was not about to take the scandalous and financially chancy leap of leaving the Senator: an amicable separation and a no-fault divorce were not a viable option. Even if she ever had the faintest feelings of amorous attraction to Adams, she held back from allowing her entanglement with him to flower into full-fledged romance, let alone sexual coupling. This was despite her encouraging him coquettishly for a while to expect that they might have a liaison. He had warmed to her as soon as they met, but any [hopes of enjoying intimacies](#) with her were ultimately dashed after he had fallen or had been pulled definitively into love with her in 1890. At that juncture, he hied halfway around the globe, going so far as to charter a steamship on his own for part of the itinerary, to have a tryst with her that then failed to happen. He was not exactly jilted, but a line was drawn. The continued asexuality of being friends without benefits was not at all of his volition. To his bitter chagrin, [his interactions with her](#) seem to have been irreproachable. After years of pussyfooting, Adams professed to despise the role of “tame cat” that his unromantic relationship with her seemed to constrain him to assume. Refusing to back down, he instead struck a pose as a big cat—but no longer one ranging in the wild. He paced, a would-be lion, aging pent-up within the loveless cage that the terms of their relations wrought for him.

Although assignations and sex with the bewitching Elizabeth Cameron lay beyond reach for Henry Adams, the two had forged a close emotional link. Their affair was one of the heart. They tailored their attachment largely of words. These tiny puffs of air or squirts of ink always have the potential to seduce. The underlying reality of their power helps to explain why etymologically “charm” derives from the Latin *carmen* for “song” or “poem,” “glamour” from the Latin *grammatica* for knowledge of Latin grammar. For him, the viva voce of small talk, and perhaps even more the literate one of letters, stood out as essential components of mutual attraction and love. When romance with La Dona eluded him, he made what he could of the syllables and sentences that he might have preferred to deploy in wooing of a less exclusively intellectual sort. He could never possess her physically: she was forbidden fruit or made herself into it. Yet he became wedded to her verbally. Despite his ardor to be far more than a mere pen pal, they engaged in a prolific and deeply personal correspondence over the [decades](#). He penned her missives on nearly a daily basis. Ultimately, this turn in their relationship may have suited him. Although not emotionless, he seems to have had an easier go in written disquisitions about the most powerful emotions than in experiencing or expressing them. Like Henry James, he may have committed himself more readily to writing about the strongest forces in life than to living them.

In the long gestation of *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres*, Henry Adams sent for her vetting his translations from medieval French. When circumstances permitted, [he](#)

read aloud to her, sometimes along with her daughter and other women, swatches of his prose. If writing was his gymnastics, she extracted from him a degree of rapt attention that rivaled what the tumbler dispensed sweatily for Mary. There is an onomastic basis for connecting Elizabeth Cameron with the Virgin and for construing Adams's devotion to her as almost automatically a punning sort of Marianism. Like others among her confidants, he addressed her often as La Dona. The nickname was obviously constructed as a bit of [wordplay](#) upon the shortened form of her husband's personal name. At the same time the moniker came unmistakably close to another term. She was his Madonna.

In *Esther*, Henry Adams includes a twenty-one-year-old enchantress from Colorado named Catherine Brooke whom he models minutely upon Cameron. The seductive young siren in his fiction is out of step with her times and more at ease in older ones. In fact, she

would hardly have felt surprised at finding herself turned into an Italian peasant-girl, and at seeing Michael Angelo and Raphael... walk in at the side door, and proceed to paint her in celestial grandeur and beauty, as the new Madonna of the prairie, over the high altar.

Was Adams overlaying on Cameron his own attraction to the past, or did he turn to Mary on the rebound from her? To look at the situation through different optics, two years after the publication of the novel, Cameron acquired an additional resemblance to the Virgin and Child. She would cradle in her arms a babe, her young Martha. Adams, who doted on the two, could easily have [superimposed his mental image](#) of mother and daughter upon the Virgin and Child. If he did so, the conflation was hardly unwitting. In [an 1891 letter](#) to La Dona, he drew a comparison between the Madonna in this role and Cameron in maternal mode.

The invocation of Italian art here in the novel probably refers cunningly to Raphael's *Madonna del Prato* (1506), that is, "Madonna of the Meadow" (see Fig. 2.5). The Italian painter was the gold standard in the Golden Age of collecting. [His Madonnas were prized](#). In fact, the association between the artist and this subject ran so strong that he has been described as ["born to paint Madonnas."](#) The *Madonna of the Chair* in the Pitti Gallery in Florence had international renown (see Fig. 2.6); it was as widely known then as the Mona Lisa or Venus de Milo are today. Henry James described how ["people stand in worshipful silence](#) before it, as they would before a taper-studded shrine." To take another Mother and Child, one stop that impressed Clover deeply on her honeymoon trip with Henry Adams to Europe and Egypt was the German town of Dresden, where she was struck by the oil painting by Raphael known as the [Sistine Madonna](#) (see Fig. 2.7).

During what has been called the ["buying craze"](#) between 1870 and World War II, American merchant princes and captains of industry coveted this early standout of the Italian Renaissance and his Madonnas. In 1897, the art historian Bernard Berenson compiled a list of Raphael paintings with their locations. At that point the United

States had none. By 1909 the nation could boast two, by 1932 nine. What had been a conspicuous absence in American art collections throughout the nineteenth century was soon remedied many times over. The continent became saturated, even oversaturated, with [depictions of the Virgin Mary](#) genuinely or supposedly by the Italian painter. For all that, the [craving to own a Raphael Madonna](#) would not recede until well into the twentieth century. The topic of American acquisition of Italian Madonnas demands a mention of two items displayed in the Washington home adjoining that of the Adamses. In the front hall of Hay's mansion hung a Madonna attributed then to Botticelli and now to his school. In the library, pride of place was assigned to a Madonna and Child by the seventeenth-century painter [Giovanni Battista Salvi da Sassoferrato](#). The oil on canvas, [round in format](#), hung over the fireplace in a frame of highly decorated gold.

As mentioned, Adams had the loan of Elizabeth Cameron's quarters in Paris each year while she traveled in the United States. When he occupied the apartment, it became what he regarded as his hermitage. In the summer of 1899, he lauded the City of Light to John Hay, his bosom friend, singling out as praiseworthy qualities of the metropolis "the [religious rest](#) that it diffuses, and the cloister-like peace that it brings to the closing years of life." An involuntary celibate at the time, he [returned repeatedly](#) to the image of monasteries, with monks devoted to the Virgin, in correspondence with both Hay and others.



Fig. 2.5 Raphael, *Madonna del Prato*, ca. 1505–6. Oil on wood, 113 × 88.5 cm. Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Raphael\\_-\\_Madonna\\_in\\_the\\_Meadow\\_-\\_Google\\_Art\\_Project.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Raphael_-_Madonna_in_the_Meadow_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg)



Fig. 2.6 Raphael, *Madonna della Seggiola*, ca. 1513–1514. Oil on panel, 71 cm. diameter. Florence, Palazzo Pitti, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Raphael\\_Madonna\\_della\\_seggiola.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Raphael_Madonna_della_seggiola.jpg)



Fig. 2.7 Raphael, *Madonna di San Sisto*, ca. 1513–1514. Oil on canvas, 265 × 196 cm. Dresden, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:RAFAEL\\_-\\_Madonna\\_Sixtina\\_\(Gem%C3%A4ldegalerie\\_Alte\\_Meister,\\_Dresden,\\_1513-14.\\_%C3%93leo\\_sobre\\_lienzo,\\_265\\_x\\_196\\_cm\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:RAFAEL_-_Madonna_Sixtina_(Gem%C3%A4ldegalerie_Alte_Meister,_Dresden,_1513-14._%C3%93leo_sobre_lienzo,_265_x_196_cm).jpg)

More than once in *The Education of Henry Adams*, this man of letters would strike a monastic pose. In it, the author looked back at a visit he had paid in 1867, four decades earlier, to a former medieval English monastery. With the wisdom of hindsight, he claimed that on the previous occasion he had “yearned for nothing so keenly as to feel at home in a thirteenth-century Abbey.” Then, after describing the fluster and turmoil in Paris one half decade afterward during the Franco-Prussian war, he told how “he fled to England and once more took refuge in the profound peace of Wenlock Abbey” (see Fig. 2.8). He suppressed the inconveniently unmonkish circumstance that he was traveling with his newlywed wife.

Adams’s much later recollection of the attitudes that he espoused during this earlier stage in his life coincides with what he described back in the day. In the thick of the Civil War, he wrote to his brother, Charles Francis Adams Jr.: “If we lived a thousand years ago instead of now, I should have become a monk and would have got hold as Abbot of one of those lovely little monasteries which I used to admire so much among the hills in Italy.” This is prime Henry Adams. He imagines being a monk in a beautiful abbey. Yet in his fantasy, he assumes that he will be at the helm. The obligations of having to obey higher-ups or even simply of existing within a rule-driven community go conveniently unconsidered. And how would he have been as a manager of direct reports?

Wenlock Abbey or Priory was a broken-down twelfth-century Cluniac monastery (see Figs. 2.9, 2.10, 2.11 and 2.12). It belonged to an Englishman whom Adams befriended while in England during the Civil War. This Charles Milnes Gaskell led the active career in law and politics that his American intimate failed to achieve—or managed to avoid (see Fig. 2.13). Adams’s new acquaintance took breaks from the *vita activa* for the recreation of the contemplative life in his monastic ruins. Wenlock captivated the interest first of Adams and later of other Boston Goths as well. Thanks to Gaskell, Adams could play in a real-life setting at being a medieval monk. Even when he visited with Clover for the first time in the summer of 1872, Wenlock persisted in being for him a dreamy place for feigning time travel back to a monastery of the Middle Ages. His changed marital status did not hamper his imagining. His bride’s role-playing followed a different lead: as the couple sojourned in a bedchamber in the eight-hundred-year-old Norman wing of the estate, she too felt transported into the past “as if I were a fifteenth-century dame and newspapers, reform, and bustle nowhere.”

During their stay in the abbey, the sense of being carried away came along with a healthy dose of scholarly scrutiny. Their host presented them with books on medieval architecture by Viollet-le-Duc as a wedding present for them to take on their subsequent itinerary. The immersion in research became a family habit. Nearly a decade later, when husband and wife toiled shoulder to shoulder in the French archives on his multivolume history of the presidencies of Jefferson and Madison, she described their routine as “an existence of Trappist monks.” By the purest stroke of good fortune, the couple wended their way back to the monastic order of white monks with which the humbler hero of *Our Lady's Tumbler* had been affiliated. The Cistercians would not have been happy with their setup.





Fig. 2.8 Left to right, Henry Adams, Lady Cunliffe, Charles Milnes Gaskell, Clover Adams, Lord and Lady Pollington, Sir Robert Cunliffe, at the Chapter House, Wenlock Priory, Much Wenlock, UK. Photograph, 1873. Photographer unknown. Boston, Massachusetts Historical Society, Marian Hooper Adams Photographs. Image courtesy of the Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston. All rights reserved.

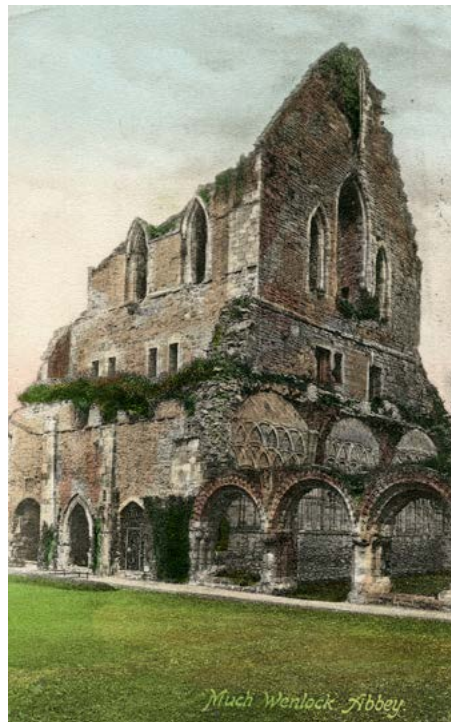


Fig. 2.9 Postcard depicting Wenlock Priory, Much Wenlock, UK (Reigate, UK: F. Frith, 1904).



Fig. 2.10 Postcard depicting the south transept and prior's house at Wenlock Priory, Much Wenlock, UK (Reigate, UK: F. Frith, 1886).



Fig. 2.11 Wenlock Priory, Much Wenlock, UK. Photograph by Wikimedia user Speedbird2064, 2013, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Wenlock\\_priory.JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Wenlock_priory.JPG), CC BY-SA 3.0



Fig. 2.12 Postcard depicting Wenlock Priory, Much Wenlock, UK (Reigate, UK: F. Frith, 1904).



Fig. 2.13 Alphonse Legros, *Charles G. Milnes Gaskell, Chairman of the County Council of the West Riding of Yorkshire*, 1867. Oil on canvas, 116.5 × 92 cm. Wakefield, UK, Wakefield Civic Collection.

Henry Adams's play-acting in the early 1870s stood him in good stead a quarter century later in life. As a longstanding widower and unrequited wooer, he adopted the imperturbable abstinence of a medieval monk. Yet he took unmonkish measures to ensure that his wifeless existence would not be utterly womanless. Should we call this approach sublimation? Whatever terminology or conceptual framework to which we subscribe, he threw himself into his idiosyncratic pretense of being wedded to the idea of the Virgin. He slipped no gold band around the ring finger of a Madonna, but he made many other gestures to signify his loving commitment to Mary. His conception of Our Lady, if that collocation of words is admissible, managed to be at once deeply spiritual but ultimately wholly un-Christian. By being an [agnostic Mariolater](#), he remained to life's end a paradox. His Mother of God was feminine, sensuous, unselfconscious, and either irrational or at least nonrational. She incarnated the very qualities he judged, in his stereotyping, to inhere in all women of all times as well as in mother goddesses of all places. In his *Education*, Adams generalized: "No woman had ever driven him wrong; no man ever driven him right." This attachment of his resembled the type of medieval devotion known as courtly love: he put unobtainable women in his life upon pedestals by idolizing them. His wife Clover [lay not far from an actual slab](#) by 1891, when the shrouded figure to memorialize her was erected. The bronze stood mere feet from the otherwise unmarked grave where her mortal remains were interred. By that time, she had been dead for six years. His definitive plinth for idolization of both Mary and Marian became his book on *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres*, in which he declared: "the proper study of mankind is woman."

Henry Adams took flight into the past and translocated to a Middle Ages tinged by romanticism. Beyond its special personal significance to him because of his honeymoon, Wenlock came to occupy in his imagination a place loosely akin to the

one Tintern had held for William Wordsworth (see Fig. 2.14). The English romantic poet immortalized his response to the decrepitude in his famous “Lines Composed a Few Miles above [Tintern Abbey](#).” Ruins, sham and real, had formed a [part of the Gothic revival](#) since the days of Gothick spelt with a *k*. This evocation of the Middle Ages in architectural decoration and household furnishings, as well as in literature, is associated especially with the [Georgian period](#) from 1714 through 1830, when the British kings George I through IV reigned.

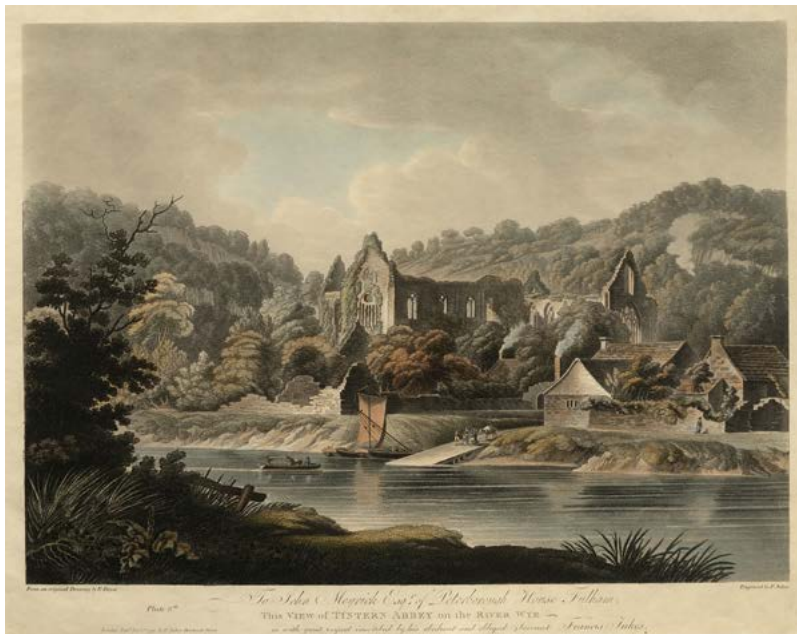


Fig. 2.14 Tintern Abbey on the River Wye. Engraving by Francis Dukes after drawing by Edward Dayes, 1799. Private collection. Image courtesy of the University of Michigan Digital Collections.

For a long while, the Middle Ages have functioned as an oasis, a [destination for escapists](#), to which to retreat from political or personal dissatisfaction with or alienation from the present day. The period signified for Adams a place of repose that he hoped somehow to import into the noisy newness of the incipient twentieth century. Like many others of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, he cultivated a yearning for medieval times.

In *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres* Adams pigeonholed Romanesque as being too “serious and simple to excess” for the liking of young people who were partial to Gothic. In general, he endeavored to dispel notions of the later style as embodying “religious gloom” or “age and decrepitude.” Instead, he cherished this fashion as representing idealism and “exuberant youth, [the eternal child of Wordsworth](#).” The equation that made beauty and youth equal the Gothic pointed arch and the Middle Ages can be discerned in a [postcard](#) from 1899 (see Fig. 2.15).





Fig. 2.15 Postcard depicting a young woman in medieval clothing, with a pointed Gothic arch behind her, and the caption *Moyen-Age* in Gothic script beneath (Jack Abeillé, 1899).

Adams pretended to be long in the tooth. In this stance, he was an old man whose life in architectural terms had been “a broken arch.” He wanted at one and the same time for his portrayal of the earlier manner to embody his own talents as well as tempt his readers, both older friends and the younger women he styled nieces “in-wish.” As we have seen, as narrator of *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres*, he plays at being an aged uncle in conversation with these real and honorary relatives. They were the fan club he collected around him, whose wonderment he sought to stir through his writings. Like Gaston Paris before him, the American historian regarded the Middle Ages, or at least the early Gothic slice of them, as simple. As such, they corresponded to the youthful phase in a human life. What could have been more appropriate than dishing them out to young ladies?

Adams’s absorption in the medieval worship of the Virgin, whom he extolled as “the greatest force the Western world has ever felt,” verged on obsession. His Marian passion constitutes a common element between *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres* and *The Education of Henry Adams*. Mary can be termed the protagonist of the former work. In both it and personal correspondence, the author described the book as *Miracles of the Virgin*. From his perspective, *Our Lady underpins the entire thirteenth century*. He gave no alms in her name and made no donations to her shrines that have been recorded, but he did shower upon the Mother of God considerable resources in conducting his researches and publishing their results.

In *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres* Adams contrasts the spiritual barrenness of his times with the belief that once prevailed. He accepts that the religion of preceding centuries has lost its hegemony, and yet personally he holds fast still to a Christianocentric worldview. Though from his viewpoint the true faith has long since died, contemplation of it can conjure up Mary with a power that abides even to his



day. Not a wisp of non-Eurocentric cultural relativism is detectable here—nor would it be fair to expect it. The adjective does not yet exist, but he is unapologetically a Euro-American.

For all that, Henry Adams clings to the Mother of God as a cultural phenomenon, not to the religion in which she was embedded. He was a secular-minded sophisticate, while not inconsistently American and at least aspiringly spiritual. Yet in the final analysis, any spirituality on his part was directed toward a personal cult of women rather than toward any strain of Christianity. As he submitted to Henry Osborn Taylor: “Dear brother in the thirteenth century: I think you even believe a little, or sometimes, in human reason or intelligence which I try to do in vain. You respect the Church, I adore the Virgin.”

Despite all the words we have from Henry Adams, many still elude us. One fascinating transcription would document whatever discussion took place at the west front of Amiens. Alas, we have no record of the words that flew between Augustus Saint-Gaudens and him, when together at this locus they inspected the so-called Virgin Portal of the cathedral. Yet sometimes it may be a blessing to be left with the necessity and opportunity to exercise our imaginations.

Adams formulated a long poem in honor of Our Lady, or at least of her as a vehicle for impressing another woman. In it, he aired his trust in the continued presence of Mary in the modern world. In February of 1901, at what was in those days the advanced age of sixty-three, he tendered the verses to La Dona as his own sort of votive offering. But let us not get ahead of ourselves: first things first. He wrote the hymn one year earlier, while drafting *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres*. For other reasons too, 1900 is too important to be leapfrogged. In more than one way, it is history in the making.

## Universal Exposition of 1900

The Universal Exposition of Paris in 1900 succeeded that of 1889 for which the Eiffel Tower had been built. It turned out to be the last in a cycle of such world's fairs that had been staged in the French capital at eleven-year intervals from 1867. From visits to its exhibition spaces, Henry Adams emerged both awed and filled with unease by technological advances. He lacked the unruffled certainty of the art critic John Ruskin, who by chance died in that numerically memorable year, retaining a confidence in the staying power of the Middle Ages. In the Englishman's estimation, the medieval period could hold its own, especially where cathedrals were concerned, against modern technology. In contrast, the American's whole sense of past and present, never complacent, was first shaken and then altered by the spectacles he witnessed in the nearly two hundred and fifty acres of the display. Nowhere was he more keyed up than in the Gallery of Machines.

In *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres*, Adams even avowed that shows such as the Parisian ones had replaced the great churches. He flipped this same conceit on its head

in a letter, labeling a thirteenth-century cathedral “a [Chicago Exposition for God’s Profit](#).” His correlations of Gothic places of worship and World’s Fairs merit serious consideration. Especially from the mid-nineteenth century through the mid-twentieth century, nations and cities set out in displays of themselves to project concomitantly their utmost modernity and the medieval, or at a minimum imagined medieval, roots of their collective identities. The American writer’s insight could be probed and extended, with attention to the two [visits he paid to the exhibition](#) of 1893 in the Windy City. The Middle Ages were only a bit player in the Midway Plaisance, but they had a presence. As we have seen previously, the [medieval was grouped with the oriental](#), chrono-exotic with topo-exotic.

Adams described his reactions in a chapter of his autobiography entitled “The Dynamo and the Virgin.” In turn, this twenty-fifth chapter set the stage for the thirty-third, “A Dynamic Theory of History.” The [symbolism of the dynamo and the Virgin](#) has spellbound many readers, although the fascination may not always have rested on a clear-sighted and even-keeled understanding of the early twentieth-century context for the author’s juxtaposition of the two concepts or principles. Over the large public green space known as the Champs de Mars towered the cavernous [Palace of Electricity](#), which itself was topped by a statue that represented “the Genius” of this form of energy (see Figs. 2.16 and 2.17). To Adams, the heart of this centerpiece to the whole Exposition was the Great Hall of Dynamos. This space housed forty-foot steam-driven electric turbines, generators that produced 15,000 horsepower (see Fig. 2.18). Where an earlier generation had contrasted the cathedral of Notre-Dame and the Eiffel Tower, he presented as complements or contrasts Mary, inspirer of the Gothic house of prayer, who embodied the ongoing might of the feminine in history, and the shed where the machinery whirled: it was a match between great church and great hall.

Alongside Adams’s reverence and gusto for leading-edge science and technology ran a deep fear of apocalypse. He had lived through most of the second scientific revolution in which a concatenation of discoveries had ushered in better comprehension of electromagnetism and light. In 1895 he made the ten-day tour of French cathedrals that pushed him on the road toward *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres*. Unbeknownst to him, around the same time Alexander Stepanovich Popov in Russia demonstrated the applicability of radio waves for communication, Rudolf Diesel in Germany invented a high-compression and thermally efficient engine, and Wilhelm Röntgen in Germany discovered the basis for X-rays. To say that human scientific mastery of the world and universe was evolving with almost indescribable rapidity would be an understatement, even an anticlimax. The American historian would have grasped few if any particulars of the latest developments, but he understood the general features enough to crave the equivalent of a general theory for his own field. He endeavored especially to subject history to the [second law of thermodynamics](#), that of entropy. Things fall apart.

An even more remarkable evolution was at hand. The third stage in the emergence of modern science was poised to begin in the early twentieth century with the

relativity and quantum theories of Albert Einstein, Max Planck, and others. Adams had no foreknowledge of the insights into physics that would make nuclear fission first imaginable and then achievable. All the same, he sensed that the command of physical powers at the disposal of his fellow human beings already surpassed their level of spiritual civility. Were people witnessing progress or the mere phantom of it? He had his qualms that the potentials of technology had outdistanced its capacity to advance civilization. Have times changed very much—or gotten even worse?

Already in the thick of the Civil War, Henry Adams pronounced to his sibling Charles his anxiety that human science had outstripped the capacities of the species and that it would enable humankind to cut off its own existence. Much later in life, he adumbrated a similarly alarmist view to his other brother Brooks. A pregnant passage on powerful machinery appears in *Democracy*, as the novelist characterizes the widowed Madeleine Lee and her zeal to fathom the rough-and-tumble of politics in the United States. The steam engine energized the industrial revolution and industrialization. He had no way of intuiting that this age of vaporized water would cede before long to other types of industrial-strength energy and engines—that soon the era of internal combustion would usher in new fossil fuels and oil derricks.



Fig. 2.16 Le Palais de l'Électricité et le Château d'Eau at the Exposition universelle 1900, Paris. Photograph, 1900. Photographer unknown. Published in Neurdein Frères and Maurice Baschet, *Le panorama: Exposition universelle* (Paris: Librairie d'Art Ludovic Baschet, 1900). Providence, RI, Brown University Library, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Le\\_palais\\_de\\_l'électricité\\_et\\_le\\_Château\\_d'eau,\\_Exposition\\_universelle\\_1900.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Le_palais_de_l'électricité_et_le_Château_d'eau,_Exposition_universelle_1900.jpg)



Fig. 2.17 Postcard depicting le Palais de l'Électricité at the Exposition universelle 1900, Paris (Paris: Météor, 1900).

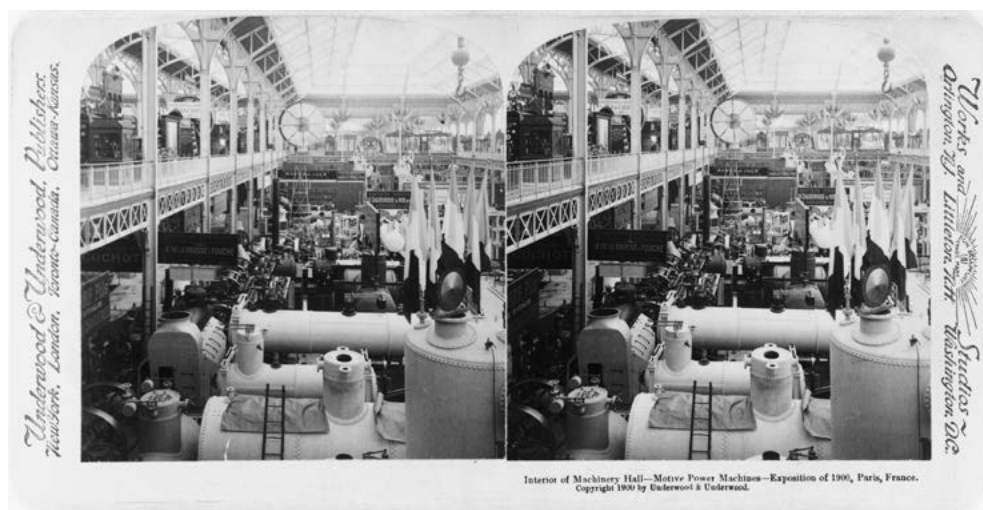


Fig. 2.18 Machinery Hall at the Exposition universelle 1900, Paris. Stereoscopic photograph, 1900. Underwood & Underwood, New York. Kyoto, National Diet Library. Image courtesy of the National Diet Library, Kyoto.



The Paris Exposition of 1900 was exuberantly and vigorously schizophrenic. In its split personality, it utterly typified its times. Among other things, it celebrated in French culture the unexpected counterpoint between cutting-edge modernness and romanticized medievalism. It took place in a city that had doubled in population in fifty years, that had been remade in its urban planning, and that concretized new political, economic, and technological realities. But the old was ineluctably present too, at least as processed through the retinas of the new. The bygone too came with the territory. In the World's Fair of 1889, the consummate modernity of the Eiffel Tower had been accorded an opposite pole to the Middle Ages epitomized in Notre-Dame. A chronological otherness of culture was promoted alongside the geographical one of aboriginal peoples from regions under the thumb of colonialism around the globe. The shows, particularly that of 1900, were concerned with the reconstruction and even regeneration of the medieval period, as well as with the display of its artifacts as [unearthed through archaeology](#). The spirit was anything but "in with the new, out with the old." On the contrary, the Middle Ages were back, with a vengeance. The new millennium was greeted with a reenactment of times deep within the one being left behind.

## Old Paris

So poor Elias Wildmanstadius, with a  
fifteenth-century soul in the midst of the  
nineteenth century, beliefs and love for  
another age in the midst of a selfish and  
prosaic civilisation, found himself as utterly  
out of place as a [savage from the banks of  
the Orinoco](#) transplanted into a fashionable  
Parisian club.

—Théophile Gautier

The counterbalance to the twentieth-century technology enshrined in the Great Hall of Dynamos was on display in the Middle Ages as re-created in the exhibition called *Le Vieux Paris*. Old Paris, to put the French into English, celebrated "Townspople of the Medieval Quarter" and "[Paris in 1400](#)," and supplemented the "[Court of Miracles](#)." These presentations helped to offset the industrialization that was on show among the equipment. In contrast to the dehumanization implicit in smooth-running machinery and well-oiled turbines, these alternatives showcased humanity and human achievement: chivalry of knights and damsels, courtliness of troubadours, and splendor of Gothic architecture (see Fig. 2.19). During the three decades since the Franco-Prussian War, the French had pored over medieval literature and art. Now, craving still closer contact with those olden times, they poured themselves into a wide-ranging reenactment of the Middle Ages.



Fig. 2.19 Postcard depicting costumed reenactors from the Exposition universelle's "Bourgeois du quartier Moyen-Âge" (Albert Robida, 1900).

Henry Adams is unforthcoming about his experiences of Old Paris. In his letters he does not even reveal whether he set foot in the temporary living history museum. As hard a time as we may have picturing him shouldering his way through throngs of fairgoers, he could hardly have missed the site. Like its 1889 predecessor, the Exposition of 1900 contained a retrospective of medieval art. At the same time, it exceeded the preceding event in the magnitude of its ambition to conjure up the life and culture of Paris in the Middle Ages. It furnished visitors a neighborhood from slightly more than one half millennium earlier that was not only reconstructed but also reenacted—it not merely



rediscovered but even fabricated what was supposedly medieval. Adepts then and now may sneer at such cooption of bygone days, but exercises of this sort have helped to keep the present from tyrannizing our consciousness more than would otherwise have been the case. The past needs advocates who can bring it back to life, and that revivification comes not just in learned disquisitions but also in re-creations.

**One of three quarters**, the fifteenth-century medieval one, dominated. The complex was situated on the right bank of the Seine at the Alma Bridge, a short hop from the area known as the Trocadéro. Opposite it on the left bank were the international pavilions. In other words, the spectrum of time faced that of space. By night the picturesque skyline, studded with towers and turrets, blazed with electric floodlights. When open to the public, the **half-timbered edifices** of the zone included thronged restaurants, watering holes decked out as old-time taverns, and shops. All of them were well appointed to facilitate sales of goods and services, all of them had waitstaff in medieval costume. There was as well a chapel where performances were staged.

The buildings were only part of the effect. Equal emphasis rested upon living human beings, in the person of reenactors wearing costumes deemed to be true to the Middle Ages. These pseudomedieval individuals were removed by time rather than space from the France of 1900, but otherwise they were comparable with the colonized natives put on display elsewhere in the exposition as simulacra of the exotic. Likewise, their exoticism or otherness formed a chronological counterpart to the geographical distance that was bridged by the importation and exhibition of people and things **from colonies in Africa and the orient**.

**In Old Paris**, for-hire actors spoke what aspired or pretended to be medieval French, strummed old-fashioned instruments, sang songs from the Middle Ages, and so forth. Minstrels, tantamount to jongleurs, were notable among the reenactors. Such entertainment in the context of what were essentially chronologically determined amusement parks was nothing out of the ordinary at the time. In fact, it attracted strong and largely commendatory note from the press. For instance, we have detailed accounts of a **parade and street fair** modeled after the Feast of Fools in Victor Hugo's *Notre-Dame de Paris*. These happenings were staged by students of law and other disciplines in 1898 (see Fig. 2.20). It featured stalls in which tradespeople demonstrated their proficiency in their different forms of artisanry and **hawked their wares** (see Fig. 2.21). Such reenactments were at least for a while an annual event around the turn of the century (see Fig. 2.22). Another example was a page taken from Victor Hugo's "Court of the Miracles" (see Fig. 2.23). Twice daily, a three-hour show reenacted chivalric tournaments, royal processions, mystery plays, and more. This particular theme park on "Paris in 1400" was meant to profit from the interest in the 1900 Exposition, but the distance of the location from the main fairgrounds caused it to pale in contrast with the bigger re-creations (and recreations) of the Middle Ages nearer the Seine (see Fig. 2.24). Though the promoters put their activities into rivalry with the Eiffel Tower, they could not stand up to that kind of competition.



Fig. 2.20 “Fête des fous” parade, Paris. Photograph, 1898.  
Photographer unknown.



Fig. 2.21 “Fête des étudiants—La kermesse du Panthéon.” Woodcut by Fortuné Louis Méaulle, 1898. Published in *Supplément illustré du Petit Journal* (1898).



Fig. 2.22 “Les Fêtes de Paris,” featuring the Feast of Fools and a parade float in the guise of a medieval ship, flanked by soldiers. Woodcut by Émile Tilly, 1899. Published on the front page of *L'Illustration* 57.2939, June 24, 1899.



Fig. 2.23 Postcard depicting the reconstruction of Paris's famous “Court of the Miracles” neighborhood, part of a larger “Paris in 1400” attraction (Paris: Courmont Frères, 1900).





Fig. 2.24 Advertisement for the “Paris in 1400” attraction during the Exposition universelle of 1900. Poster, 1899. René Péan. Marseillaise, Marseille.

Nowadays the prolific [Albert Robida](#) is remembered mostly for a profusion of travel guides, popular history, book illustration, caricatures of his contemporaries, children’s literature, and science fiction. Yet he was a wholehearted devotee of the medieval period, and the mastermind behind the reconstruction of the French capital as it was dreamt to have existed in the Middle Ages. The architecture of Old Paris simulated buildings and neighborhoods that had been dismantled since the Revolution. The temporary exhibition resuscitated medieval architecture that had been obliterated in the modernization and urban renewal of Paris conducted between 1853 and 1870 by the prefect of the Seine Georges-Eugène Haussmann. This farsighted planner remade the city during the Second Empire of Napoleon III. Wheeler-dealer of the big-city landscape, he foisted upon the metropolis a scheme that favored the classical architectural orders and imposed geometric symmetry and axial patterns through the institution of *boulevards* and *places*. While modernizing, Haussmann expunged through eminent domain the warren that had formed the cobblestones core of medieval Paris. An architecture that had been like many millennium-old manuscripts, requiring expertise to navigate and decipher, emerged much more like a large-print book, so pin-sharp as to be nearly legible to an illiterate. At the same time, Viollet-le-Duc repaired the cathedral of Notre-Dame to [erase painful memories of damage](#) caused by

the passage of centuries, especially during the Reign of Terror, when the Middle Ages had been less than beloved.

Robida's plans look extravagant, no more reflective of reality than were his fantasy writings. He wished to re-create in miniature a medieval center that had been effectively bulldozed decades earlier (see Fig. 2.25). From his feverish imaginings, would it be fair to consider him a [French predecessor to Walt Disney](#)? The comparison may not be invidious. The dreamer toiled overtime to realize his visions, and he managed to bring them to fruition not just in art works and publications, but also in a physical reality that was the harbinger of a theme park. As photographs from the time document, the grand schemer's made-up reconstruction of Paris from the Middle Ages was fabricated on a life-size scale out of real materials in [three dimensions](#) (see Fig. 2.26).



Fig. 2.25 A reconstructed view of the Old Paris waterfront. Watercolor by Albert Robida, 1900. Lemercier, Paris. Published in Albert Robida, *Le vieux Paris: Études et dessins originaux* (Paris: Exposition universelle, 1900).



Fig. 2.26 Robida's vision of a reconstructed medieval waterfront, brought to life for the Exposition universelle de 1900. Photograph, 1900. Photographer unknown.

The quarter was a popular destination for visitors—and subject for postcards, posters and other advertisements, stamps, and a wealth of other ephemera and souvenirs (see Fig. 2.27). Vendors even peddled [cutout mock-ups](#), so that enthusiasts could replicate the neighborhood on a small scale at home. The exposition and shopping went hand in hand. Robida churned out not only detailed guidebooks in conventional format (see Figs. 2.28 and 2.29), but also a printed book in imitation of an incunabulum or manuscript, which gave a nodding acquaintance with medieval history (see Fig. 2.30). The guide contains a page very much in the vein of *Le jongleur de Notre Dame*, depicting musicians clustered around a statue of the Madonna and Child (see Fig. 2.31).

Robida's wildly creative enterprise cries out to be contextualized within the sweep of international movements that were often meant to capture realities of disappearing rural and peasant culture as ballast to industrialization. The Middle Ages elicited similar preservationist and reconstructionist efforts and energies, since the medieval period was viewed as constituting both collectively Europe's indigenous primitive cultures and the wellspring for regionally distinguishable folk practices and characteristics that defined the continent's constituent nations and ethnic groups.

To be specific, Robida's project of Old Paris anticipated one subclass of museums throughout the world that have been designated by a variety of names: [living-history museums](#) or simply living museums, outdoor museums, folk museums, and living farm museums. After a few rough-and-tumble trial runs in the first half of the nineteenth century, the concept of such institutions was articulated and realized fully for the first time in Scandinavia in its last two decades. Near Oslo in 1881 was established what evolved eventually into the [Norwegian Museum of Cultural History](#), which in turn inspired an open-air museum known as [Skansen](#) in Stockholm in 1891 (see Fig. 2.32). All these initiatives furnished the public with opportunities to experience al fresco, lifesize, and living dioramas of exotic and disappearing peoples and cultures, both domestic and foreign.



Fig. 2.27 Postcard depicting medieval buildings reconstructed for the Exposition universelle de 1900 (1900).



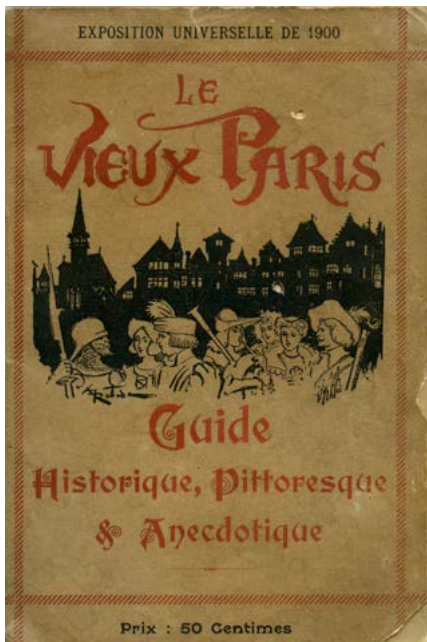


Fig. 2.28 Front cover of Albert Robida et al., *Le vieux Paris: Guide historique, pittoresque et anecdotique* (Paris: Ménard & Chafour, 1900).

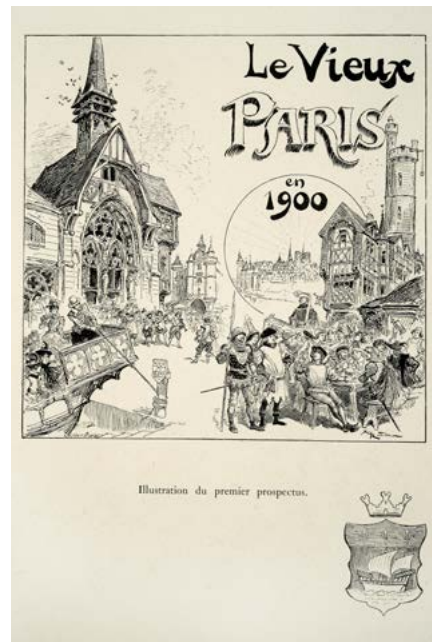


Fig. 2.29 Title page of Albert Robida, *Le vieux Paris: Études et dessins originaux* (Paris: Lemerrier, 1900).



Fig. 2.30 Title page of Albert Robida, *La nef de Lutèce* (Paris: Les trois écritaires, 1900).

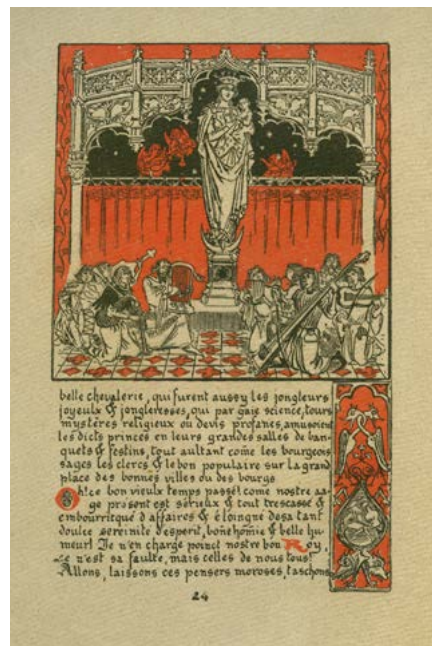


Fig. 2.31 Medieval musicians play before the Madonna and Child. Illustration by Albert Robida, 1900. Published in Albert Robida, *La nef de Lutèce* (Paris: Les trois écritaires, 1900), 24.



Fig. 2.32 Postcard "On the Way to the Dance," depicting musicians and dancers at Skansen, Stockholm (Stockholm: Axel Eliassons Konstforlag, ca. 1901–1904).

Within Old Paris, the replica of [Saint Julian of the Minstrels](#) marked the start of the medieval quarter (see Figs. 2.33, 2.34 and 2.35). Robida himself singled out the original on which it was modeled as "one of the most curious of the countless churches of bygone days." Historical documents hold that the church was [commissioned to be built](#) in the thirteenth century by "jongleurs, minstrels, and masters of the art of minstrelsy relating to the knowledge and craft of music, who then resided in this city of Paris." The house of prayer was destroyed during the ruckus of the French Revolution.

Robida's large portfolio of studies and designs for Old Paris includes one for a colored window of Saint Julian that portrays "The Dawn Song and Prayer of Poor Jongleurs-Minstrels Passing before the Image of Our Lady the Virgin" (see Fig. 2.36). One half of the stained glass depicts three buskers, with old-style instruments in hand and a medievaesque cityscape behind them. The other shows a trained monkey and costumed goat. The ruminant is reminiscent of the pet that belonged to the gypsy heroine of Hugo's *Notre-Dame de Paris*. The two circus-type animals stand before a Madonna and Child, with large lilies noticeable in the foreground. Another illustration by the author and artist depicts a couple of instrumentalists, one a bagpiper and the other a woodwind player, posed near a statue of King David on the same church (see Fig. 2.37). The ties to the French writer went beyond possible allusions in iconography. In the chapel, the [bell-ringer](#) from Notre-Dame presented demonstrations of his ding-dong dexterity (see Fig. 2.38).



Fig. 2.33 The reconstructed Église Saint-Julien des Ménestriers, entrance to the medieval exhibition of the Exposition universelle de 1900. Watercolor by Albert Robida, 1900. Published in Albert Robida, *Le vieux Paris: Études et dessins originaux* (Paris: Lemerrier, 1900).



Fig. 2.34 Postcard depicting medieval reenactors outside the reconstructed Église Saint-Julien des Ménestriers (Paris: Berthaud, 1900).





Fig. 2.35 The reconstructed Église Saint-Julien des Ménéstriers. Photograph, 1900. Photographer unknown.



Fig. 2.36 Jongleurs playing dawn song before Madonna. Design for glass window by Albert Robida, ca. 1900. Published in Albert Robida, *Le vieux Paris: Études et dessins originaux* (Paris: Lemerancier, 1900), plate 19.



Fig. 2.37 Dawn song before the statue of David in l'Église Saint-Julien des Ménestriers. Illustrated card by Albert Robida, ca. 1900. Au Bon Marché, Paris.

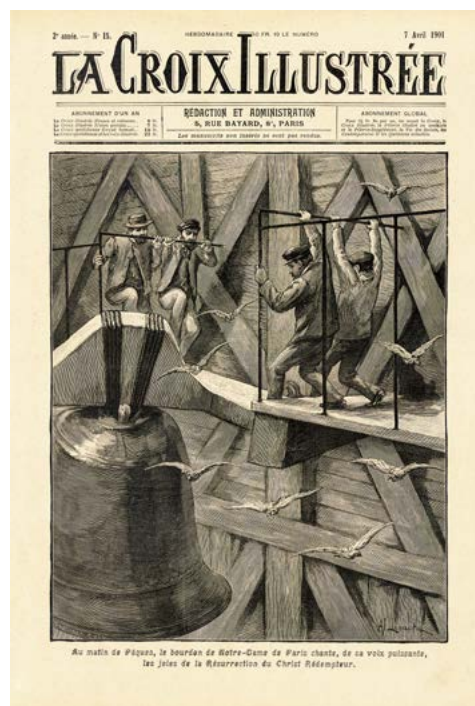


Fig. 2.38 Bell-ringers of Notre-Dame de Paris. Engraving by Alexis Lemaistre, 1901. Published on the front page of *La Croix Illustrée* 2.15, April 7, 1901.



Could Henry Adams have refrained altogether from paying a visit to Old Paris? Dubious. Would he have paid lip service or even approved? Once again, the answer is likely to be negative. He was not one either to sniff or to harrumph. Then again, he would not have reacted with ebullient positivity either. If he took surreptitious pleasure in posturing as a “historical tramp,” his objective was to travel as the “Virgin’s pilgrim” to the “World’s Fairs of thirteenth-century forces that turned Chicago and St. Louis pale.” He thirsted unquenchably for unmediated access to medieval times as he imagined them. In contrast, Robida’s exuberant reconstruction belongs thoroughly to the image of the Middle Ages as purveyed in France in 1900. His medievalism would have been a far cry from what Ruskin sold until his death in that same year. The pseudomedieval quarter would not have been a hindrance, and may even have been a boon, to Adams as he assumed an attitude as a survivor of the twelfth century who had prayed with Bernard of Clairvaux and debated with [Peter Abelard](#).

To look beyond Adams, Old Paris helped to solidify the stature of the Middle Ages as an object of desire. The most affluent who fancied keepsakes could still seek out actual or at least purported medieval artifacts for their collections. Those of more limited means could instead acquire mass-produced items that reproduced objets d’art from many centuries earlier or re-created them without seeking to replicate them exactly. Rich and poor alike had opportunities to bury themselves in reenactments—plein-air in expositions and exhibitions, indoors in plays and operas. The occasions for such exposure were only growing. [The event left many disconcerted](#) and disillusioned, as well as surfeited with World’s Fairs. At the same time, as viewers mulled their own times and prophesied the future, the loss of idealism may have fed into an even sharper wistfulness for an imagined Middle Ages. Thus, the stretch from the Crystal Palace Exhibition of 1851 to the Universal Exposition of Paris in 1900 did not mark the end of either medievalizing or the juggler-jongleur. Far from it.

## Dynamo and Virgin Suicide

Despite multifarious quirks and unique distinctions, Adams does not cease to be very much a man of his day. In his own mature stage of life, he hones his ability, like the Roman god Janus, to gaze at one and the same time backward and forward. He overviews both history and the future. Hawk-eyed, he looks back at two periods, the earlier covering his young manhood from 1840 to 1870, and the later one spanning three decades from 1870 to 1900. At the same time, he gapes slack-jawed from the present forward.

*Mont Saint Michel and Chartres* was published in the thick of what has been flagged as the machine age, a late phase of the industrial age, dated approximately between 1880 and 1945. Adams evidences an almost boastful ambivalence, because advances in modern technology at once attract and repel him. As a result, he is put in a mind to sprint from his new century for the Middle Ages—but by tooling about seatbelt-less

among cathedral towns in an eighteen-horsepower Mercedes Benz. Nor does he have the slightest blind spot about the incongruity between his means of transportation and the objective of the motion. Rather, he relishes it with open-eyed and [wide-mouthed wryness](#). Picture a carful of sporty Boston Brahmins, eyes shielded by goggles, hair protected in silk hairnets, as they whiz from Gothic monument to monument, shifting into overdrive to travel back into the medieval period.

Putt-putting cars, as opposed to whinnying horses, were only one of many changes transforming life at a rate to make the head reel. Before the onslaught, Adams was [hard put to maintain his aplomb](#). In French art, postimpressionism would soon cave to cubism. Under similar pressure to impose upon the world a new or at least a renewed geometry, the author turned to the Middle Ages—or rather brought his reconception of them into the early twentieth century. The paradox of this view is anticipated already in January 1841, when the hypomanic Gothic revivalist Pugin described himself as “[such a locomotive](#) being always flying about.” Adams rejected technology for his counterintuitively agnostic Mariodulia—or does it even slip into Mariolatry? Yet his pirouette away from modernity toward Mary and the medieval period is thus not complete. In fact, it subverts itself somewhat. Then again, we should perhaps conclude that the hypnotic power residing in whirring dynamos and purring automobiles was in his view only illusory, nothing next to the [Virgin-driven strength of the medieval West](#).

When Elizabeth Cameron's apartment was unavailable to him, Adams took lodging in quarters not far from the Exposition. From this redoubt, he could sally forth to surround himself with the gadgetry in the Great Hall. At the same time, he accumulated hillocks of books, from which he built what he called “a gay library of twelfth century architecture” and “a [school of Romanesque literature](#).” Among the volumes was a [collection of Marian miracles](#) composed in the second half of the twelfth century. The French title may be rendered roughly into English as “The Book of Grace.” Another item in this depository was a study of Peter Abelard. A third tome explored the philosophy of [Thomas Aquinas](#), the Dominican theologian and philosopher. [Submerging himself in scholastic philosophy](#), Adams annotated publications on this last topic more heavily than any others with which he busied himself during this period.

In this state, midway between the twelfth and the early twentieth centuries, Henry Adams drafted his “[Prayer to the Virgin of Chartres](#)” (1901). The poem was inspired by the “prayer to the Virgin” by Adam of Saint Victor. It contains as one subsection a “Prayer to the Dynamo” with a dialogue between man and the atom. In this case [the last two syllables](#) recall the first man Adam as well as the family name of the author himself. This poetry offers in many ways a foretaste of *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres*. As so often with Adams, his text is grounded in searing personal circumstances. Aged sixty-three, he remained deeply smitten with the far younger Elizabeth Cameron. To her he wrote about the piece. To her alone he sent the [first fair copy](#). The prayerful

verses retained significance to him until the end of his life. The final version was discovered in a packet of special papers after his death. Let us be clear: the lines express belief not in the religion surrounding the Blessed Virgin, but in the idea that womanhood could function as a counterweight to the modernity, on the outskirts of modernism, from which Adams sprang back. Mary is counterpoise or alter ego to both the modern and the masculine.

Ambivalence in the face of his contemporary world pervades his classic autobiography, *The Education of Henry Adams*. He was both drawn to and repelled by the hurly-burly life of his day. In contemplating the United States, he was not obtuse about the exhaustive transformations that the society and culture in which he had been raised were undergoing. To the same effect, he held strong views on the roles being played by the new rich whose wallets had been fattened by the technological and economic developments of the post-Civil War years. He perceived the spiritual energy that in his opinion had once derived from the Virgin now being replaced by physical power emanating from mechanical devices. But the new resource suffered from stark limitations. The dynamos were mesmerizing, but to him they held no promise of ushering in salvation.

To Adams, redemption was vested in females alone, as incarnated in Mary as mother. Only Our Lady could repair the anomie he saw encircling him. Childless, he glorified maternalism. The procreativity of motherhood dwarfed the rational energy of man-made apparatuses. Machines could produce, while women could reproduce; dynamos could generate, while mothers could regenerate. The Mother of God was the archetypal woman and mother. Though Adams was not Catholic, and in fact not a believer despite his professed longing to arrive at belief, he manifested a fixation that exalted faith as tantamount to culture. His attraction had a cultural basis in the vogue for religion that was fostered by what has been labeled the “[Catholic Renaissance](#).” To go further, he cherished a devotion to the Virgin that bordered upon Mariolatry. This attachment developed only after his wife took her own life on December 6, 1885. Her given name of Marian prompted their close friend John Hay to the double meaning of calling her “[Our Lady of Lafayette Square](#).”

Even as a newlywed Clover revealed depressive tendencies, perhaps inherited. Much later she drained a vial of potassium cyanide, a chemical employed in developing photos, and killed herself. Such decease by self-poisoning (a not always inadvertent photo finish) had become entrenched already as a [staple of the photographic profession](#) and hobby. She had steeped herself deeply in picture-taking over the preceding two years, especially since acquiring a camera of her own in 1883.

Despite the torturously unhappy ending to his wife’s life, Adams counted his thirteen years of marriage (or [at least the first dozen of them](#), before she sank into despondency) with Clover as the happiest of his life. Double-checking his calculations is impossible: marital bliss can resist quantification by any outsider, let alone one who blunders along more than a century after both members of the couple have passed

away. We are on surer ground in assessing his reactions to his spouse's suicide. Out of hurt, anger, guilt, shame, embarrassment, or some mix of these and other emotions, he imposed upon himself a [sustained and rigorous silence about her](#). This resolute wordlessness extended even to his shredding all her letters to him. Going further, he refrained for decades afterward from uttering her name or discussing her. His autobiography is pointed in omitting all mention of her. In at least this one regard, he lived up to the most self-denying soundlessness of Cistercian standards. Among the white monks, speechlessness can be the highest form of compliment. But did he mean to be complimentary?

The other response, of enigmatic memorialization, came in the construction in 1890 and 1891 of a monument in Rock Creek Cemetery in Washington, DC (see Fig. 2.39). The [Adams Memorial](#), as it tends to be called officially, features a remarkable six-foot-high bronze sculpture that rests on a rough-hewn stone. The image is by Augustus Saint-Gaudens, an American sculptor of note and, eventually, a close associate of Adams. The bronze and stone are in turn situated within a frame fabricated from two monoliths of buffed granite. This setting was [designed by Stanford White](#) (see Fig. 2.40), flamboyant partner in the renowned American architectural firm McKim, Mead and White.



Fig. 2.39 The Adams Memorial in Rock Creek Cemetery, Washington, DC. Photograph, 1974. Photographer unknown. Washington, DC, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

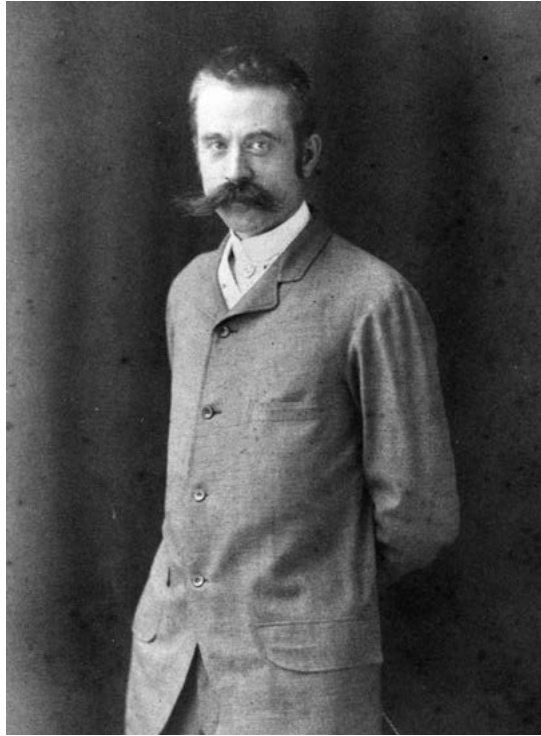


Fig. 2.40 Stanford White, age 42. Photograph, 1895. Photographer unknown. Washington, DC, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

The statue represents a seated person, whose entire body is shrouded in a full-length cloak. Its androgynous face is recessed within a cowl, and its chin rests upon a partly open upturned hand. The pose befits a shrine near which Henry was buried himself thirty-three years after Clover's death. There is no headstone for the mortal remains of either husband or wife. The artist called the figure *The Mystery of the Hereafter*, Adams *The Peace of God That Passeth Understanding*. After viewing the composition in 1906, Mark Twain observed that it personified all human grief. The American writer's words contributed to its being known popularly as *Grief*. The representation can in fact be interpreted as heartache—the one that weighed down Adams's wife and induced her to kill herself, the one that took hold of her distraught widower afterward, and others at which we can only guess. Yet construing the statue as standing for sorrow incarnate may be too easy.

Twain's appellation for the cast was much to Henry Adams's displeasure. The emotion of grief was not the significance Saint-Gaudens and he meant to evoke. They described the being at the memorial as a Buddha, to embody nonchalant composure and equanimous calmness. On his journeys to what was then the Far East, the widower had admired representations of the sage. In his own spiritual development, he paired *Brahma with Buddha*. What a coincidence: a Boston Brahmin was in quest of Brahman,



a principle that he discerned in both Hinduism and Buddhism. He was influenced deeply by the East Asian goddess of Mercy known nowadays as Guanyin, whom he encountered in statues in Japan, and by [discussions of nirvana](#) with his friend and travel companion John La Farge. Beyond Adams's supposed personal aspiration to achieve qualities vested in the Buddha, we have seen that in the Gilded Age viewers traced parallels between a twelfth-century Virgin and Child, such as the [Morgan Madonna](#) (see Vol. 2, Fig. 1.3), and Chinese sculpture, such as a medieval Buddha (see Vol. 2, Fig. 1.4). The memorial lends itself to interpretation as medieval and monastic, eastern and Buddhistic, or [all these things at once](#).

As an embodiment of undismayed reflection or withdrawn grief, the statue could imply a divinity or intercessor to which a mourner could repair for solace. It is poker-faced, but expressionlessness does not necessarily equate to affectlessness. Among many other things, the sculpture may have been a Mary meant for a miracle of reconciliation. A connection with the Virgin would not be far-fetched. As Saint-Gaudens reconnoitered for inspirations to guide him in crafting the work of art, Adams cited to the sculptor two portrayals that Clover and he had esteemed, one of which was the [Sistine Madonna](#). The multivalence of *The Peace of God* is very much in keeping with the desires of its patron. To the qualities of [universality and anonymity](#) that its commissioner saw in it, we could add a string of others, such as ecumenicism and asexuality. Henry Adams being Henry Adams, he surely had his own readings of the statue. Yet he succeeded in his aspiration to keep his own views close to his chest and to let the bronze become a Rorschach test for all who happened to see it, just as the tale of *Our Lady's Tumbler* has become for everyone who reads it and rewrites it.

A photograph of the writer captures his likeness in 1891 (see Fig. 2.41), around when the memorial to his deceased wife was completed. He visited the casting in situ [not much later](#). Spookily (given his wife's mode of taking her own life), the self-portrait is the product of amateur photography. He took it in the library of his Washington home with a box camera that he activated by a rubber tube connected to a squeezable bulb held in his hand. There he sits, mustachioed and meditative, posed like a male equivalent of Whistler's mother.

An intense attachment to the Virgin, not religious belief but conceptual attraction, took hold of Adams during his subsequent relationship with Elizabeth Cameron. In *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres* he [explicated devotion to the Mother of God](#) as having a sexual basis. To be specific, he fitted Mary within a view of history that traced a wave pattern on male-and-female axes. His glorification of Our Lady in such a sexualized context has stoked, understandably and not unconvincingly, [psychoanalytic readings of his personal life](#). Massive doses of vaporous fantasy are not required to suspect that his Mother of God comprehended aspects of the two major women in his adult life: Marian Adams, the spouse who sundered herself from him when she took her own life, and the married Elizabeth Cameron, who eventually was ready to have affairs, but not with him.



Fig. 2.41 Henry Adams in the library of his home, 1603 H Street NW, ca. 1900. Photographic self-portrait (MS Am 2327). Image courtesy of Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.

The chapters of *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres* on the Virgin of Chartres have been called astutely “a [consolation-gift](#) that Henry Adams gave to himself to compensate for Marian’s absence and Elizabeth’s unattainability.” He idealized and idolized both females. The onetime and once again medieval historian found himself a Dante who pined for two Beatrices, one dead and the other living. The unreachability of both afforded him every reason to [channel his passions](#) toward a flawless Virgin he located in a remote past. By way of a time machine in his imagination, he traveled centuries back in search of the eternal woman. Like the tumbler in the medieval poem, he was all too versed in the heartbreak of unrequited love.

Adams’s growing attraction to Elizabeth Cameron later bubbled into what could be fairly called obsession. Whether the early stages of this infatuation contributed to his wife’s year-long slough and suicide is a question that has been [much explored](#), with judgments varying considerably. Did he even recognize that he was falling for the younger woman? Is love in fact the right label to describe his susceptibility at that point? Regardless of his own perceptions or imperception, did his helpmate notice? She imbibed the poison two days after making her last social call—a visit to Cameron. Did he feel any subsequent and consequent culpability about Clover’s death by her own hand?

Many other explanations for why she poisoned herself are conceivable. The Hooper family tree has boughs that broke off abruptly because of lunacy and suicide. Long before Clover killed herself, Charles Francis Adams Jr. [spluttered once tactlessly](#)

that Henry could not marry her because her relations were “all crazy as coots.” Or, a predisposition toward deep depression could have been exacerbated by any of numerous contributing factors—for example, the direct outcome of [recently losing her father](#). She had been strongly, even immoderately, devoted to him, since losing her mother when she was only five years old. In fact, she imbibed the fatal draft of developing fluid on a Sunday, the day of the week on which she had habitually written the old man when he was still alive and well. The timing may have spoken to the unfilled void of loneliness that yawned within her when he passed out of her existence. Then again, Clover could have resorted to the lethal chemicals at least partly out of despair at her childlessness (and would that state have owed to her infertility or his—and would knowing one way or the other even have mattered?), in an age when most women who could bear children did so. Indeed, the younger woman with whom she spent time socially just prior to her act of despair was in the first trimester of pregnancy. After delivering on June 25, 1886, the new mother wanted to call her daughter after Clover’s given name. Unable because of Henry Adams’s travels to secure permission from him to do so, she [called the baby girl](#) not Marian but Martha.

To look for a very different sort of root cause, her husband’s failure to take seriously and [ratify her passion for photography](#) could have stalemated her. After she was solicited to publish a photo of hers in a [high-circulation magazine](#), he scuttled the idea. His flat-out refusal to grant her permission could have been stinging. It would have brought home how much she lacked an outlet for her creativity and intellect, independent of Adams’s ambitions. If in her truncated life she left behind a lasting testament beyond the impact she had on the people who met her, the legacy she bequeathed consisted in her pictures. They evidence aptitude in the technical skills that the new craft required, as well as prowess in applying them to bring out the character of her subjects.

Whatever answers we fashion to the speculations that the death of Adams’s wife may arouse, La Dona came in the years afterward to occupy a figurative plinth where he adored and adulated her, though never having the fullness he sought for their relationship. Much later, World War I contributed to the loss of the daughter in the La Dona-and-Child pairing toward which he transferred his desire and sublimated his longing. Elizabeth Cameron’s Martha died young in 1918. Her death came partly as a consequence of the body- and soul-trying conditions to which she had been subjected as a nurse to wounded combatants in World War I.

Although Adams engages in constant dialogue with generic young ladies in *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres*, he leaves unnamed the most important two. His panegyric of Woman is meant to resound to Marian beyond the grave and to La Dona across oceans of time, space, and sexual distance. Clover was gone everlastingly, but *Grief* by Saint-Gaudens endures in perpetuity. That is the way of art. As for the Middle Ages and medievalism in the nineteenth century, *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres* may be read less now than formerly, but it still retains the clout of a valued curiosity. Medieval times

themselves refuse to die, a site sometimes of nostalgia, sometimes of melancholy. Cut to the quick by his unfulfillment both personal and professional, Adams made the Middle Ages both sorrow and its redress. The Christianity and Marianism at the fore of *Our Lady's Tumbler* presented two strong grounds on which his supposedly uncle-like but equally husbandly and romantic imagination would have been gripped by the piece of medieval French poetry. Among other incitements, the profession of the protagonist in the poem may have been the greatest.

## Henry Adams as Jongleur

In the *Mont-Saint-Michel*, whatever Adams translated, either the poetry of the court, or the *chanson de geste*, or the cathedral arch, or the miracles of Our Lady, he rendered not only the spirit of an age, but his own portrait. It may be grotesque to imagine him, like her tombeor, capering naked before the image of the Virgin in the shadow of the monastery of Clairvaux. But he was there [exposed before the image](#).

—Louis Zukofsky

A very obvious question that confronts the reader of *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres* is whether to judge Henry Adams as an academician, a man of letters, both, or neither. A subtler conundrum is whether or not he passes muster as a jongleur, since he identified, or at least professed to identify, with him. At first blush, an interrogation along these lines would seem unbelievable. Socially, Adams was the near opposite of the man that this far-fetched hypothesis would posit to be his counterpart. Whereas the medieval French tumbler frequented the fringes of society, the American speculated of himself: “probably no child, born in the year [of 1838], held [better cards](#) than he.”

On the face of it, the two had little in common. Short and unathletic, Adams was anything but a champion. Yet he was a hard worker who could have empathized with both the stamina of the tumbler and the overtiredness to which the lay brother drove himself through his feats of devotion. The collapses that the medieval performer is described as undergoing could have resonated with him. The erstwhile educator suffered from what was diagnosed by the late nineteenth-century American medical establishment as the catchall national ailment of [neurasthenia](#). This condition brought with it a susceptibility to anemia, spells of lightheadedness, and blackouts. To physical limitations could be added personal qualities and circumstances. Both the ignorant tumbler and the erudite Adams claimed to regard their choices and trade-offs in life and career as fiascos. Both elected to draw a shroud of protective silence over themselves, as they lived in solitude among their respective communities. Although

in very different ways, both the man of letters and the jongleur qualified as outsiders. They lacked or chose to forfeit a solid place in the social hierarchy.

The Harvard professorship formed a brief intermission between Adams's service abroad during the Civil War as a private secretary to his father and his years planted in Washington, DC, where he was a prominent but pointedly a private citizen. He gave up the one *métier* for which he was hired. He seemed to crave laurels as a writer, but he concealed his authorship of his two novels and severely hobbled the circulation of his two most popular nonfiction works. He never competed for elective office or was detailed to a political one.

In the chapter of *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres* on miracles, Adams quotes nearly ninety lines from *Our Lady's Tumbler* in both the original French and his own English translation. After the first long quotation, he describes the traveling acrobat in terms that whisper at self-awareness of his own position: "Tormented by the sense of his uselessness to the society whose bread he ate without giving a return in service, and afraid of being expelled as a useless member." In many regards, this characterization of the long-ago entertainer as a nullity having nothing but nuisance value could have applied equally well to the plight of the writer in his later life. He subsisted on income from inherited wealth, most of it from his wife. The passing years put him ever further from the university position from which he had resigned. Time had rendered him ever unlikelier to be summoned as counselor to the president or any other national potentate, if he even aspired to such an appointment. For all his wisdom, he was no Solon. All the same, he took steps to transcend the defeats in his personal and professional life. In his solitude, he composed words of prose and verse about the Middle Ages and Virgin as well as about modernity and dynamos, to be released deliberately to a preselected claue of so-called nieces and other intimates. Henry Adams soliloquized, much as the tumbler danced.

Beyond any corporeal infirmity or personality traits he shared with the thirteenth-century entertainer, Adams convinced himself that his values as an individual matched those of jongleurs as a social class. If the Blessed Virgin embodied the vanished faith of the medieval past, then the writer's self-imposed role in his book was to escort or chaperone his readers as pilgrims back into the Middle Ages. By so doing, he rescued them from what he regarded as the bleak modernity of the early twentieth century. In his guise as companion on such peregrinations, Adams had another inducement to be drawn to *Our Lady's Tumbler*. He postured himself as a minstrel who mediated between his public and Mary as well as between his days and those of yore.

To broaden the last assertion slightly, Adams portrayed himself as a tumbler who tripped the light fantastic between the present and past. In this regard, a letter of his to Henry Osborn Taylor in 1905 has pertinence. Adams described his former colleague's aim as an occupationally credentialed historian to conduct readers back to the Middle Ages as those times had actually been; to this goal he contrasted his own mission,



more amateurish or less pedantic, of relating the medieval period to what was then the present. Taylor's objective demanded the power of pulling forward the minutiae of the past, while Adams's called out for nothing less than the dexterity of the jongleur of Notre Dame.

Similarly, in earlier correspondence with Taylor, Adams differentiates between on the one hand the English historian William Stubbs, Bishop of Oxford (see Fig. 2.42), and on the other his own close friend, the American artist [John La Farge](#). By setting up the two men as the opposing sides of an abyss, Adams points to the gap between professional history based on the rigorous establishment and interpretation of texts, and what would now be called cultural history. In this case, he gives a generous dose of attention to the artistic products of the culture under examination. Who can decree that one approach outreaches the other, since both have their constraints? Everyone knows that the past is irrevocable and unrepeatable, which rules out full success for Taylor's method—but Adams's mode has, alongside all the beauty of its artistry, all its limitations.

Adams retained enough vestiges of being an Enlightenment man in the mold of his grandfather and great-grandfather to recognize that he lacked the faith to perform truly for the Virgin Mary. He had taken his own measure well enough to realize that his true audience comprised women he could not possess as he wished—the wife he had not saved but had lost, the beloved he had sought but never won, and the nieces who mostly were not nieces after all. At least for sexual abstinence, it was all too fitting for him to pretend to be a hermit. In *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres*, he played the additional role of a jongleur.

The parallels between the writer of the early twentieth century and the street-acrobat of the medieval French poem do not trail off with their like-minded desire to cloister themselves. Adams lived if not in the shadow, then at least outside the brightly lit arenas of public service, politics, and commerce that most of his relatives haunted, and he forsook the academic post that he had taken as an alternative. In effect, he retreated from the spheres of both active and contemplative life to a zone of custom-made disunion. He set up shop a block from the White House, but there too he felt out of place. He had then every reason to identify with the tumbler, who began out of despair to frisk before the altar of Mary as an offering to her. As has been the case for all manner of writers since him, Adams's words were the dances and leaps that he did in her honor. Like the medieval entertainer before him, he danced a pas de deux with the Virgin.

In writing of Mont Saint Michel, Henry Adams struck the pose of a Norman [juggler](#). His closest equivalent was [Taillefer](#). In an old legend, this supposed personage belonged to the entourage that accompanied William the Conqueror in the Norman invasion and occupation of 1066. The story goes that this jongleur performed the *Song of Roland* for the Norman troops before the Battle of Hastings while juggling his sword (see Fig. 2.43). The professional performer [drew special attention](#) in the aftermath of the eight-hundredth anniversary of the Norman Conquest, and at the time of the Franco-Prussian War.



Fig. 2.42 Hubert von Herkomer, *Portrait of William Stubbs*, before 1885. Oil on canvas, 89 × 74.5 cm. Oxford, Oxford University, Bodleian Library, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Portrait\\_of\\_William\\_Stubbs\\_by\\_Hubert\\_von\\_Herkomer.jpeg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Portrait_of_William_Stubbs_by_Hubert_von_Herkomer.jpeg)



Fig. 2.43 “The Song of Taillefer at the Battle of Hastings.” Engraving by Edward Henry Corbould, 1872. Published in *Supplement to the Illustrated London News*, October 12, 1872.

When dealing with the cathedral of Chartres, Adams made a casual effort in role-playing as the tumbler. In both cases his own book was tantamount to his song or, to deploy his own word, his libretto. He recounts in a [letter written to Elizabeth Cameron](#) how as an “act of piety to the memory of [my] revered grandfather” he repaired in 1891 to the Opéra Comique in Paris to attend *Richard Coeur-de-lion*. What constituted

the pietas? John Quincy Adams had first heard this foundational comic opera on King Richard I of England while a young diplomat in The Hague a century earlier.

The musical drama relates a legend about Richard Lionheart. On his way home from the Third Crusade, the monarch is first captured in Austria and then rescued by his faithful squire Blondel de Nesle in the guise of a blind troubadour. Henry tells Elizabeth how his ancestor, after losing the presidency, became obsessed with Blondel's solo "[O Richard, O my king](#), the universe abandons you." This identification was not without its irony, since this aria had been popular during the French Revolution as a rallying point for royalists. Be that as it may, identifying himself purposely (and name-droppingly?) with his forefather, the late nineteenth-century letter writer levitates himself in his imagination back not to the Reign of Terror but to The Hague in that earlier fin de siècle. At the same time, the music enjoyed a new lease on life toward the turn of the century through which Adams himself would live (see Fig. 2.44).

Henry Adams was a man of untrammelled but unmet ambition. For all of it, he lacked a single vocation. He [camped out in Washington](#) just across a park from the White House, and he watched. He may also have dallied to be called upon for a role that did not exist. Did he expect to be named sage laureate? Did he have his sights set on a secretariat, in the event that a future president should establish a federal department of intellect and culture?

From his closest friends, Adams earned the tenderly insightful Latin byname of Porcupinus Angelicus. The nickname, "angelic porcupine" in English, hints simultaneously at two countervailing qualities. One is ethereality. The adjective may recall specifically the [Angelic Doctor](#) himself, Saint Thomas Aquinas. Another is anti-cuddliness, a characteristic could even have been described as crustiness or crankiness. Adams was often moody, sometimes cantankerous, not outgoing by any stretch of the imagination. His intimates could not help but recognize in him a morose tetchiness that could slip into peevishness. They saw how unready he was to suffer fools gladly. The same coterie of intimates who knew and employed this byword arranged for Saint-Gaudens to manufacture a medallion. It portrayed their friend in the guise of a winged rodent with defensive spines (see Fig. 2.45).

In 1880 and 1884 Adams produced two novels of well-maintained anonymity. He cultivated the habit of releasing his major works through publication that was private, at least initially. The focus on privacy intensified after the deaths of his wife, father, and mother. For most of a decade, he gave only to his inner circle copies of both *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres* and *The Education of Henry Adams*. This manner of circulating (or not) the books was at once self-effacing and ingeniously self-promoting: in most markets, restricted supply can be parlayed into stepped-up demand. Through his peculiarly heterogeneous oeuvre and his nonconformist supply chain, Henry Adams positioned himself to have better name recognition in the twentieth century than anyone else among his friends, including at times even John Hay.

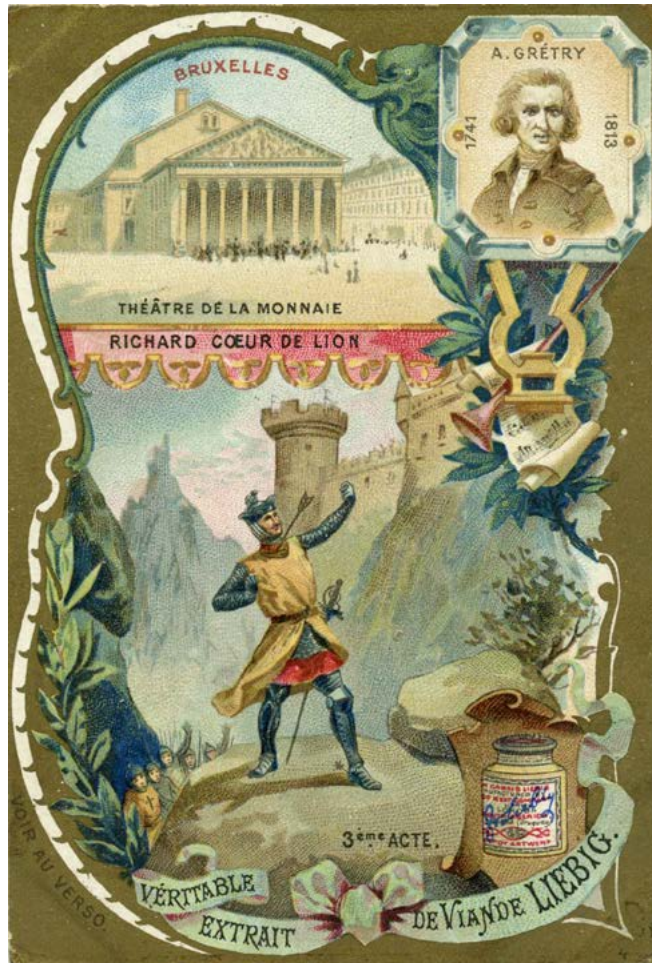


Fig. 2.44 André Grétry's opera *Richard Cœur-de-Lion* played at the turn of the century in the Théâtre de la Monnaie in Brussels. Commemorative trade card, date unknown. Paris, Compagnie Liebig.



Fig. 2.45 Caricature of Henry Adams as "Porcupinus Angelicus." Bronze medallion by Augustus Saint-Gaudens, 1904. Quincy, MA, Adams National Historical Park. Image courtesy of Patty Smith. All rights reserved.



## Unity and Multiplicity

In the autobiography Adams teases out in his crystalline prose at least two major relationships. One runs between *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres* and *The Education of Henry Adams*. The other overarches themes of unity and multiplicity. The thematic contrast in turn governs the comparison he draws between the thirteenth and twentieth centuries. He conceived of the two projects as “Mont Saint Michel and Chartres: A Study of Thirteenth-Century Unity” and “The Education of Henry Adams: A Study of Twentieth-Century Multiplicity” respectively. The subtitles remained only notional and do not grace the title pages of either book as eventually printed. Though they reflect a deeply personal perspective, at the same time they bespeak the sense of piercing loss or fracturing that intellectuals felt in the early days of modernism. They also speak to the yearning for an imagined past of greater unity—unity of man, nature, and God. To substitute for unity a word that in its construction represents a neater antithesis to multiplicity, they were wistful for greater simplicity. Antimodernism has been encapsulated as “the recoil from an ‘over civilized’ modern existence to more intense forms of physical or spiritual existence.” By this token, the tumbler himself is antimodern *avant la lettre*. He embodies the unity and simplicity that the modern character left behind.

The unity of Gothic, rooted in nature, had been noticed and commented upon at the latest by the time of romantics in Germany. In *On German Architecture* (1772), Johann Wolfgang von Goethe confessed to having been stunned upon seeing and studying the cathedral of Strasbourg. The sudden revelation shattered all his preconceptions against this style and placated his previous hostility to it. Where the polymath had been predisposed to find turbid confusion, pell-mell disorder, and rank unnaturalism, he descried instead organic oneness, wholeness, and greatness. Putting together all these qualities, he discerned authentic Germanness.

A unity seen, or thought to be seen, receding into the past behind him, and a multiplicity around him and ever noisier on the horizon—this was Henry Adams’s life, at least as he chose to frame and present it. The unlikeness between the two phrases “Thirteenth-Century Unity” and “Twentieth-Century Multiplicity” offers testimony to the oddly contorted sentimental longing Adams and others nurtured for the medieval period. They constructed for themselves a fantastical Middle Ages, including an imagined Virgin Mary. They fashioned this background from more than one half millennium earlier not in their own image, but as a remedy for the perceptions and misperceptions they had of their own day. Adams felt that over time the spiritual anchor of medieval faith had been replaced by the kinetic energy of modern science.

Because of his family background, Henry Adams grew up in a prolongation of the American Enlightenment values and aspirations with which the Revolution and its aftermath had been imbued. Subsequently he experienced, if only from afar, the ghastliness of a Civil War that seemed to put to the lie all pretenses of an Age of Reason.



As he narrowed his eyes to look back at his earlier days with all the benefit of aging hindsight, he described, with deliberate anachronism, how he had approached the transcendentalism of the church in Concord, Massachusetts, “[in much the same spirit](#) as he would have entered a Gothic Cathedral.” He compounded the sense of distance by continuing “for he well knew that the priests regarded him as only a worm.” By this juxtaposition he seems to equate the utopianism of both the transcendentalism that enveloped him in his youth, and the Shangri-La of medieval Gothic Europe that he learned to appreciate intimately [later in life](#). When he penned this retrospective, he was a widower, and nearing old age in a world that had become a radically different place from what it had been in his boyhood. The optimism of his younger years about the education, political institutions, and laws of a youthful nation had given way to what has been styled “[anarchical skepticism](#).” Such a state would brush close to nihilism.

While discharging his postbellum cataract of books, Adams lived in the day of the conflicting but also somehow complementary Gothic revival and Gilded Age. He carried within him two opposed and disproportionate refractions of the Middle Ages, through [Enlightenment contempt and romantic glorification](#)—but at least he was immune to the far greater misrepresentation that can emerge from apathy and ignorance, twin dangers in times when cultures lose track of their histories.

The dichotomy between simplicity and multiplicity was irresolvable. Adams struck a pose of nostalgic hankering for collectivity. Yet of all people he would have been the most disinclined to waive his individuality, if doing so had been the prerequisite to achieving unity by converging into such belonging. It would not have been possible to pick and choose what was preferable from each of the two eras. The cloisters of the Middle Ages boasted far more of the law-abiding monks than of the rebellious tumblers. The medieval dancer was the exception that proved the rule, in this case the Benedictine rule, as interpreted reductively by the Cistercians for laymen.

## Medievalist Dream of a Dying DC Dynasty?

[To treat Henry Adams](#) as the usual fin-de-siècle, slowly dying scion of a defunct American dynasty, à la ‘Marxian’ interpretation of literature, is obviously a mistake. The great regret is that Adams did not live ten years more than eighty to write down such a force as Lenin.

—Louis Zukofsky

The nineteenth century saw a succession of historicizing revivals, of which the assorted Gothic ones were only a few. Adams’s embrace of the Middle Ages represented a

conscious turn from the neoclassicism, born of the Enlightenment, that cocooned him in Washington. The city around him had already advanced far on its way to being the theme park of pseudoancient architecture that it remains today. A crux of the age was to straighten out whether the antiquity was that of republican or imperial Rome. Government buildings demanded authorization through association with the epochs in which the institutions they embodied had supposedly been invented. Hence the Federal-period architecture, in which torchbearers such as Thomas Jefferson sought inspiration from the classical ages of Greece and Rome for creating and authenticating an identity for the republic that they had founded and endeavored to perpetuate. To take only three examples, consider the domed Capitol that was expanded periodically, from 1793 through the mid-nineteenth century; the dagger-pointed Washington Monument to honor the founding president, begun in 1848 and completed in 1884; and the classical Doric temple to commemorate another head of state, the Lincoln Memorial, initiated in 1914 and dedicated in 1922. This threesome helped to define the capital as it took shape during Adams's time of residence there.

Like John Ruskin and [William Morris before him](#), but in his own distinctive fashion, Adams prospected in the Middle Ages for difference. In it he sought a different past, a different set of values, and a different architecture to inspire and guide him. His choice of a period upon which to model his present may seem paradoxical, and he took a likewise contrarian approach to publication. Bucking the process of commoditization by which the medieval era was being purveyed to mass audiences, he clung instead, with the impracticality of a knight on a quest, or a jongleur in an abbey, to [self-financing a limited edition](#) for distribution without charge. In forswearing notoriety, he once again feigned that he was a medieval monk. Like Gautier de Coinci or the anonymous poet of *Our Lady's Tumbler*, he worked unpaid for the Virgin.

Adams's response to the transition from Romanesque to Gothic was colored by his atavism. In imagining the builders of the medieval churches and the folk who had once worshiped in them, he fantasized that he could detect his forebears. In the process, he played at being a Norman of the twelfth century. Ruskin too had flashes of pride in the architectural past of his nation or region. The Englishman enjoined his readers to look within, where they could find the Middle Ages, by "tracing out this grey, shadowy, many-pinnacled image of [the Gothic spirit within us](#); and discerning what fellowship there is between it and our Northern hearts." Adams transplanted Ruskin's identification with the Gothic past into the radically different soil and society of his own country.

Adams's moony identification with the English and Normans of old is at once romantic and right wing. It rests upon historical misconceptions that may have appeared ill-considered already in his time and that certainly look that way today. His conception of feudalism fails to spot everything that is not benign about that system. Even uglier is the relationship between his ethnic nostalgia about the past and his racial and religious blinders about the present. The high-principled qualities that

he ascribed to Englishness and Normanness are all well and good. Yet his gusto for these supposed past races grew in direct proportion to his dyspeptic distrust of actual modern-day outsiders. Looking at his own nation, he succumbed to nativism. In his doomsaying, he expressed the opinion that recent immigrants, such as Irish and Jewish ones, posed [a threat to the integrity](#) of the United States. He aired his anti-Semitism more overtly as he aged. At least once he [drew a likeness](#) between aspects of the high Gothic style that he disliked and qualities of financial cupidity and speculation that he ascribed to Jews.

If *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres* foundered, it capsized owing to the peculiarities of Adams's circumstances. He came by his disposition naturally and perhaps even hereditarily. Whatever the cause, his character combined an ambition for proximity to the highest political offices with a predisposition to take inherently impolitic stands. He moved to Washington less like a white knight than like a hermit or anchorite, who set up house across from what would be regarded later fleetingly as Camelot. He had the tragic misfortune to lose his wife to depression-driven suicide, and subsequently to become lovesick for a woman who despite coyly disingenuous signals to the contrary would never accept him as lover or husband. Then again, he found the means within himself to channel the initial loss and the subsequent deprivation into meditations. The resultant ruminations can enthrall us more than one century afterward. I, for one, hesitate to consider such a payoff as promise unfulfilled.

Adams had inherited personal characteristics and undergone unique vicissitudes that rendered him too idiosyncratic to typify his times or represent his contemporaries. For all that, he had a lucidity of insight, breadth of knowledge and experience, and intensity of expression that enabled him to draw penetrating comparisons between his own days and those of seven or eight centuries earlier. He regarded all societies as resting upon fictions that ultimately came up short. Yet he numbered the figments upon which twelfth-century France was built among the best that humanity has ever devised.

Let us comb through the cultural forces that led to the making of the American Middle Ages in which Henry Adams participated. Boston had seen the start of a revolution once already, and now its Gothic revivalists made it the seedbed for a medievalizing revolt. In their rebellion, literature and architecture went hand in hand. From the days of romanticism down to the present, the fates of literature and architecture have seldom if ever intertwined as they have done in Gothicism. The Gothic arrival in the first three decades of the twentieth century may have been flawed sometimes in its motivation, but the buildings remain an important component in the landscapes of cities and campuses through the North American continent. The story deserves a [fuller telling](#).



### 3. Britain and the Making of the American Middle Ages

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#### The Goth Side of Washington

On comparing the Architectural Works of the present Century with those of the Middle Ages, the [wonderful superiority](#) of the latter must strike every attentive observer; and the mind is naturally led to reflect on the causes which have wrought this mighty change.

—Augustus Pugin

Classicism held incontestable sway in Washington, DC. Even so, Henry Adams was far from alone among his countrymen in favoring late Romanesque and early Gothic, as he did in *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres*. In 1864, an American [Pre-Raphaelite periodical](#) published a remarkable piece that celebrated the construction of the [National Academy of Design](#) in New York City (see Fig. 3.1). The palatial building led a piteously foreshortened life, suffering [dismantlement](#) before the nineteenth century even concluded. Yet while still standing, the palazzo made an outsized impact. The first specimen of [Venetian Gothic](#) revival mode in the nation, it took as its principal architectural inspiration the Doge's Palace in Venice (see Fig. 3.2).

Why would Americans of the Civil War era and beyond have gravitated toward medieval Italy as understood first by John Ruskin and later by Charles Eliot Norton? Beyond aesthetics, Venice was a state in which elected representatives of the people held power. In its art and architecture, it offered a model that could serve for a modern democracy. In a [letter written to Ruskin](#) in July of 1871, Norton detailed the bases on which he held the lagoon city in the highest regard. In the same year, Adams himself became imbued in the [writings and thought of Ruskin and Viollet-le-Duc](#) during his first year of undergraduate teaching. More narrowly, and less politically, the republic known as Serenissima constituted a plausible parallel to Boston as a seafaring capital



with strong trading links to the East. Ruskin argued influentially that the Italian port took its distinctive form of arch, among other things, from [Islamic architecture](#). In “The Nature of Gothic” he proffered his opinion: “The Ducal palace of Venice contains the three elements in exactly equal proportions—the Roman, Lombard, and Arab. It is the [central building of the world](#).” He thus particularized the view, pervasive long before him, that the pointed arch came to Western Europe through [contact with Eastern sophistication](#). In turn, this kind of vault propelled the transition from Romanesque to Gothic. He summed up: “In the eighteenth century no one doubted that all our Gothic art had been [implanted by the Arabs](#)!”

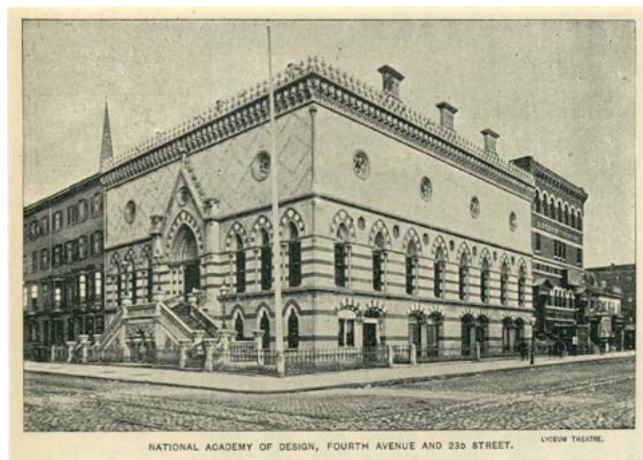


Fig. 3.1 National Academy of Design, New York. Photograph by Arthur Chiar, 1875. Published in *King's Handbook of New York City*, ed. Moses King (Boston: Moses King, 1892), 279.

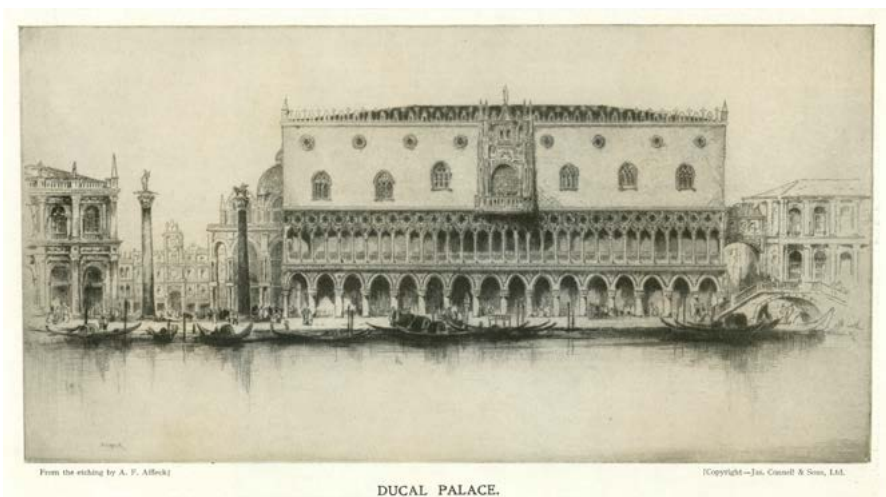


Fig. 3.2 Ducal Palace, Venice. Etching by Andrew F. Affleck, 1921.  
Reproduced on halftone print. Jas. Connell & Sons, Ltd.

A poison-pen commentary of 1864 upon the Ruskinian National Academy of Design fulminated against the preferential treatment accorded to classicizing architecture elsewhere in the United States. Along the way, it took a hard swipe at the District of Columbia for making the [Greek colonnade](#) the default choice. As a clear alternative to the reigning Hellenism, [American Pre-Raphaelites advocated Gothic](#). Writers preached this last option not just as one among many but as the [sole architectural form of worth](#). As the different camps contended, Washington was not left untouched by the revival of medieval styles. In a skyscraper-less city full of low-rises, many of the tallest structures—apart from the iconic obelisk of the Washington Monument—are Gothic. Four deserve careful attention, since collectively they help to clarify how Gothicism became a transatlantic enterprise: the Smithsonian Institution Building at the heart of the National Mall; Healy Hall at Georgetown University and the National Cathedral to the northwest; and, to the north, the Post Office Building—as it was called back in the day.

In the heavily touristed central belt of the nation's capital today, the buckle is the Smithsonian. The most visible edifice in a medieval manner, it is odd man out in the low-slung cityscape. The Greco-Roman architecture of antiquity was mostly horizontal. Although the Greeks and Romans could engineer marvels—the latter having left extraordinary aqueducts—they did not apply their skills in theory or practice to [protoskyscrapers](#). In contrast, Gothic is all about height, sometimes hubristic.

James Smithson's generosity funded construction of what is known popularly to this day as "[The Castle](#)." The building was completed in 1855 after a design by [James Renwick Jr.](#) The museum and research complex in Washington was the first achievement of the Gothic revival in the United States that in magnitude stood on a par with the cathedrals of Europe. This fortress of science and culture, a veritable bastion of learning, is constructed of red sandstone. Evocative mainly of late Romanesque, it also incorporates traits drawn from early Gothic. Although its eclectic Gothicism fuses elements familiar from England, France, and Germany, its style is meant overall to be distinctively Norman. The edifice could hardly have escaped the notice of Henry Adams or any other Washingtonian. After all, it was built in precisely the manner of the time and place with which he identified most firmly. Furthermore, its architecture prompted furor, since it brought to the nucleus of the nation's capital a towering mass that was ostentatiously nonclassical.

Completion of "The Castle" did not mark the end of construction at the site. A fire in 1865 destroyed the upper story as well as the north and south towers, which prompted the installation of fireproofing and firewalls. In addition, the east wing was enlarged in 1883, less than a decade after Adams's arrival in Washington from Harvard (see Figs. 3.3 and 3.4). The reconstruction would have rekindled public consideration of the building and its style.

Robert Dale Owen, a social reformer active in American politics, had primary oversight of the original commission. Because of the fierce dissension surrounding the project, he published a treatise in 1849 to justify the choices of Renwick as architect

and of Norman Romanesque as style (see Fig. 3.5). The title page of his screed is an elaborate Gothic fantasy. Its main structure is trelliswork composed of a stout vine that twists into a pointed arch and other shapes characteristic of the architecture, to hint at the intimate association between nature and Gothic. Owen closed the book by voicing confidence that the Smithsonian Building warranted special recognition as “the first edifice, in the style of the twelfth century and of a character not ecclesiastical, ever erected in this country.” Its Gothic was in the running to be designated the unofficial “[National Style of Architecture for America](#).” For a brief while from this point onward, a medieval revival in the United States could be presented as authentically indigenous. The equivalent in the second half of the nineteenth century to the “midcentury modern” that dominated twentieth-century fashion, it could be tagged as late-century Middle Ages—but to be more precise, it was Gothic revival. This medieval modern sounded the bourdon note in a polyphony of styles, as a rainbow of historicizing manners competed over which would prevail as the main one for the whole nation.

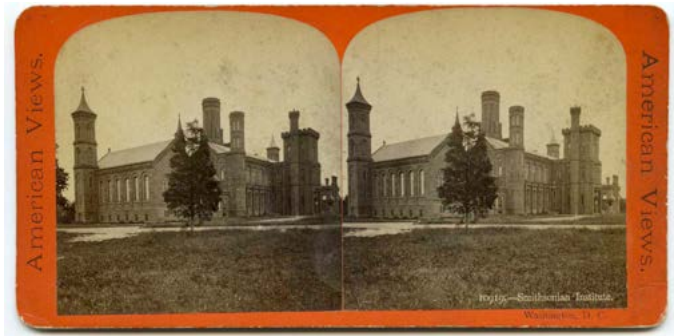


Fig. 3.3 Stereoscopic postcard of the Smithsonian Institution (“The Castle”), Washington, DC (1880s).



Fig. 3.4 The Smithsonian Institution (“The Castle”), Washington, DC. Photograph, ca. 1860–1880. Photographer unknown. Washington, DC, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Brady-Handy Photograph Collection.

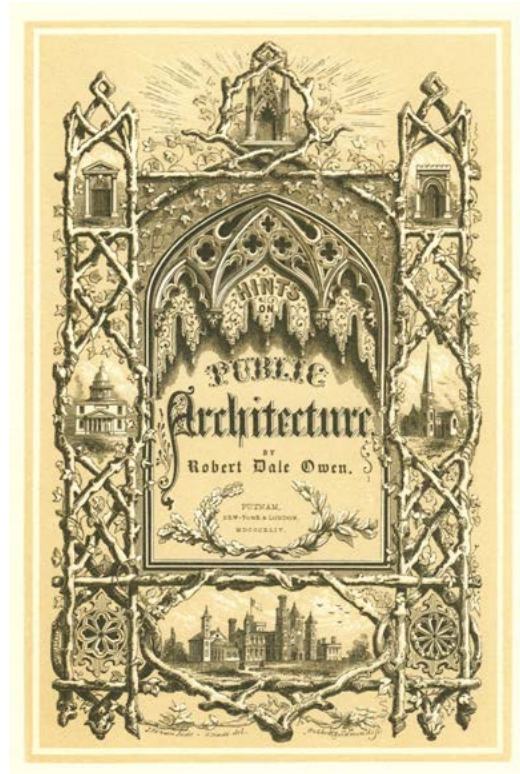


Fig. 3.5 Illustrated title page of Robert Dale Owen, *Hints on Public Architecture* (New York: George P. Putnam, 1849). Designed by James Renwick Jr., 1849.

In the architectural competition for the Smithsonian Building held in 1846, Renwick submitted to the selection committee two designs for consideration. The one accepted and erected was largely Norman; an alternative that hewed more closely to the typical Gothic revival architecture of the period was rejected, although soon enough the central section of this plan was adopted with only light modification for another imposing edifice soon erected in Washington, namely, [Trinity Episcopal Church](#) (see Figs. 3.6 and 3.7).

Right when Adams settled down in Washington, a gargantuan construction was underway across town at [Georgetown University](#). Although the neighborhood is situated far to the northwest of downtown, its topography on steeply rising hills means that its tallest edifices hulk over the heart of the city leading down to the river. The massive [Healy Hall](#) was [designed to signal the presence](#) of the Catholic university in the city and to bring home its salience, to the political and managerial elite of the capital as to others. This monumental edifice, the flagship of the academic institution, was [built from 1877 to 1879](#). Its two architects amalgamated elements that ran the gamut from Romanesque through early Renaissance, with [Gothic at the core](#). The chief features include a soaring clock tower, which made the colossus at the time handily the tallest nonfederal building in the District of Columbia.





Fig. 3.6 James Renwick Jr.'s Gothic design proposal for the Smithsonian Institution building. Drawing by James Renwick Jr., 1846. Reproduced in Robert Dale Owen, *Hints on Public Architecture* (New York: George P. Putnam, 1849), facing p. 99.



Fig. 3.7 James Renwick Jr.'s Trinity Episcopal Church, Washington, DC. Photograph by George N. Barnard, 1862. Washington, DC, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Brady-Handy Photograph Collection.



Two years after the completion of Healy Hall, a triumphal arch was erected for the 1881 inauguration of President James A. Garfield (see Fig. 3.8). Photography allows us to appreciate the timely singularity of the temporary structure. The curved shape stood perpendicular to the Renaissance revival style of the [Corcoran office building](#). The two constructions butt heads stylistically, since the *arc de triomphe* is prevalently Victorian Gothic. At the same time, it is through-and-through American, with bales of banners and bunting complementing a flotilla of flags. Long gone, both are testimonials to the urgency that the United States felt over its relationship to European cultural history.

The [Post Office Building](#) was [finished in 1899](#). Upon opening, it became the second highest construction in the District, after the Washington Monument (see Figs. 3.9 and 3.10). Its [Romanesque revival style](#) owes much to the architect Henry Hobson Richardson. The city's first steel-frame structure, it relies heavily upon glass. The glassiness is particularly apparent in an atrium that belongs to the lineage of the Crystal Palace from 1851. The melding of medievalizing architecture with what was meant to be the newest thing in modern functionality left more than one viewer displeased. Many faultfinders found the structure disagreeable. Most memorably and colorfully, Senator Joseph Roswell Hawley disemboweled it as "a cross between [a cathedral and a cotton mill](#)." Whatever the flaws of the hybrid, it must not be forgotten for its prominence within the attempts at the time to add a medievaesque backdrop to a city that had been predominantly Greek and Roman revival. Then again, backdrop may be a poor choice of words: overtop might serve better, since much of what is at issue here is the urban skyline. The medieval was not always intended as a spiritual countermeasure against the power and politics that have exercised perpetual dominion in the capital, but it often could serve such a function. The solidity of quarried stone can help to neutralize the fragility inherent in a house of cards.

The [Washington National Cathedral received its charter](#) from Congress in 1893 (see Fig. 3.11). At the time, it would have commanded an unbroken view of the Washington Monument. Visually, the Gothic architecture to come communicated directly with the pseudo-Egyptian obelisk. The church staked its claim as a cultural translation of European Christianity, to match the governmental one of Greco-Roman democracy and empire. [The foundation stone was laid](#) in 1907, with President Theodore Roosevelt in attendance to deliver an oration. The block is a composite, with American granite having embedded within it a small stone quarried from a field beside the Church of the Holy Nativity in Bethlehem. Such lithic insertions from elsewhere are apprehensible even in the stained glass within, one pane of which contains moon rock brought back to earth by an American space mission.

The house of prayer occupies a site on Mount Saint Albans that [heightens its visibility](#). Its position makes it more readily viewable from many directions than the Monument itself. One tourist is reported to have bantered that he "would willingly visit a dozen modern Gothic cathedrals for the sake of getting [one such view](#)." At the same time, the spot was chosen not only to achieve a goal in height but also to emanate

the [unworldly serenity and spirituality](#) with which Gothic architecture has been judged so often to be invested. Almost the entire great church is built of Indiana limestone, but Bishop Henry Yates Satterlee secured from the ramshackle ruins of Glastonbury Abbey blocks from which to fashion the cathedra, [the bishop's seat](#). These stones gave the prelate a storied history on which to plant himself, since the English monastic foundation was legendarily associated with Joseph of Arimathea, King Arthur, and the Holy Grail. From "the quarries of Solomon" with their biblical weightiness, Satterlee acquired white limestone for a stone altar. Despite such touches, the good bishop's mental image of the church-to-be was "a kind of [American Westminster Abbey](#), yet to belong to no denomination." Such was the highly circumscribed cultural diversity of the early twentieth century.

The place of worship would be [resolutely Gothic](#), the equal of Canterbury Cathedral. For the task, the prelate outsourced by hiring [two English architects](#) who worked in the Gothic revival style. In correspondence, one of them made apparent the extent to which he shared Satterlee's conviction about Gothic. With its closeness to nature and its inherent spirituality, the style could suit the [ambitions of America to lead modernity](#). Go, Gothic!



Fig. 3.8 President Garfield's inaugural parade on March 4, 1881.  
Photograph by George Prince, 1881.



Fig. 3.9 Postcard depicting the former Post Office Building, Washington, DC (Baltimore: I & M. Ottenheimer, date unknown).



Fig. 3.10 Old Post Office Building, Washington, DC. Photograph by Wikipedia user AgnosticPreachersKid, 2008, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Old\\_Post\\_Office\\_Building\\_Washington\\_DC.JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Old_Post_Office_Building_Washington_DC.JPG), CC BY-SA 3.0.

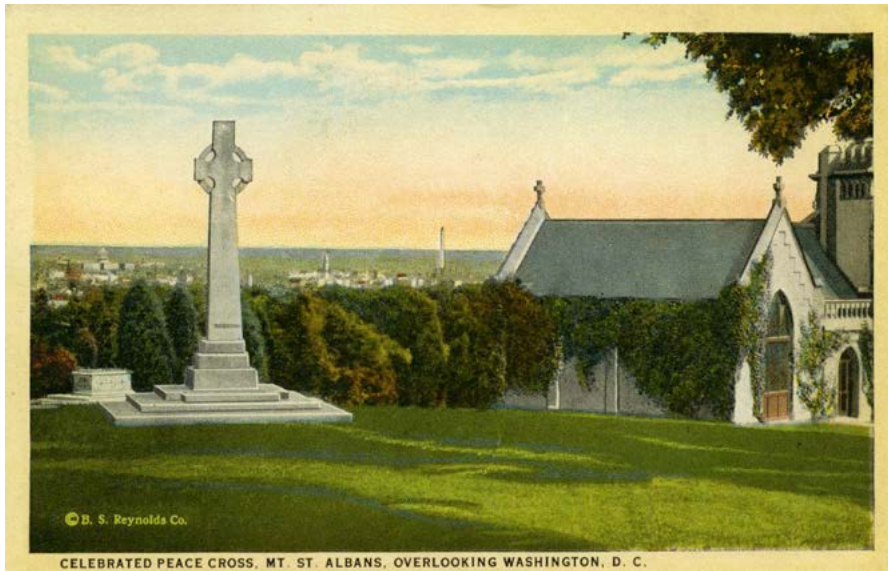


Fig. 3.11 Postcard depicting the Peace Cross on Mt. St. Albans, erected to celebrate the end of the Spanish-American War and the founding of the National Cathedral, Washington, DC (Washington, DC: B. S. Reynolds, date unknown).

The National Cathedral became the polestar in the quarter for architecture in this revival style, such as the adjacent [Saint Alban's School](#). A glimpse of a classroom brings home immediately the Gothic character of the building (see Fig. 3.12). The place of worship has also given its name to a neighborhood, Cathedral Heights. Diagonally across from both the church and educational institution stands the five-story [Alban Towers](#), Washington's largest apartment-hotel, constructed in 1928–1929 and [completed in 1930](#) (see Fig. 3.13). The cluster of buildings in Gothic revival style helps to give the locale, at least remotely, the appearance of an Americanized, early twentieth-century medieval village, if such a concoction is not a contradiction in terms. [Other bricks and mortar](#) in the neighborhood were also spruced up with modest [Gothicizing touches](#). It all [came too late](#) to have even the slightest impact on Adams, who focused adamantly upon France, especially Normandy. Understandably and rightly, even if romantically, he regarded the Norman French as contributors to the British stock from which his family traced its descent.

The Gothic revival was growing as Adams formed the germ of his thought, conducted his researches, and did his writing, and it was popularized well before *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres* came into print. Yet he concentrated the treatment of Gothic in his book upon the Middle Ages. Even so, he was too au courant of the developments swirling around him to remain insensible to the nineteenth-century revivals of medieval architecture. First Romanesque and then Gothic crazes swept the Washington of his time, as they did much of the rest of the country, even as they had carpeted Britain.





Fig. 3.12 Classroom in St. Alban's School for Boys, Washington, DC. Photograph, 1916. Photographer unknown. Washington, DC, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.



Fig. 3.13 Postcard depicting Alban Towers, Washington, DC (Yonkers, NY: Herbert C. Kahn Studios).

## Goths and the Meanings of Gothic(k)

We have encountered the original Goths sporadically already, but thus far we have not owned up to a dirty secret. In medieval Europe, no architecture exists that would have been called Gothic at the time of its construction. To clarify, no person in the Middle Ages would have understood the application of the adjective to the architecture of any medieval century. Goths were an East Germanic people of ancient times. Among their different subgroupings, the Visigoths were long understood to mean “West Goths,” while the Ostrogoths were interpreted as “East Goths.” Both are associated with the barbarian invasions that led to the fall of Rome. The Visigoths famously sacked Rome



in 410, while the Ostrogoths set up a kingdom that menaced at times both the Western Roman and Eastern Roman empires. The progenitors of both groups are remembered thanks to numerous histories, late antique as well as modern, and a multitude of place names in Scandinavia and elsewhere: Gotha, Gothenburg, Gotland, Jutland, and so forth. The Goths and the tribes that pullulated as descendants from them had distinctive languages and cultures. Still, their buildings did not have pointed arches, lancet windows, flying buttresses, spires, piers, ribs, stained glass, or any of the other features conventionally associated with what has been called Gothic architecture. In fact, the Goths lacked a masonry system in which structural elements are stabilized in thrust and counterthrust. At many times and in many places, these tribe members probably had little stonework of any sort.

Strictly speaking, therefore, the application of the adjective Gothic to literature and architecture, including the decorative arts, is always an anachronism and a mislabeling. The misfiling is now hallowed by nearly four centuries of currency, but that fact does not make it any less off-key. Yet there is no getting rid of the usage—and who on earth would want to, anyway? Words often carry many connotations. All we can do is to be as explicit as our own capacities allow in defining the denotations most germane to our needs.

Gothic was first employed in reference to architecture in the mid-seventeenth century. In that period it developed political associations, sometimes positive, in English. As an architectural and aesthetic term, it arrived from French with a penumbra of mainly pejorative overtones. Gothic was a vital part of the Dark Ages, to mark off what was medieval and romantic from what was classical. More generally it signified barbarity, rudeness, and uncouthness. These slurs are still leveled against the Middle Ages. Sometimes the offenders are experts who should know better than to bandy about such old inanities.

This Gothic was Gothick, to resort to the archaic spelling with a terminal k that can help to distinguish it from its multifarious namesakes, such as either the medieval Gothic or the sundry Gothics from the nineteenth century to the present day. Far later, a fascination with the medieval period manifested itself in Britain during the Victorian and Edwardian eras in the decorative arts. Gothic settees and chairs, tables and sideboards, lamps and candelabra, table settings and all manner of household items, and even andirons were all designed and manufactured in overabundance. Yet the style may well have achieved its most lasting, if not its most lustrous, impact architecturally. Many fine examples of domestic architecture have been destroyed by acts of God or by the malice or incompetence of human beings, but enough still exist for us to imagine how the Gothic revival in full operation would have made urban landscapes look. Beyond the buildings, texts survive aplenty that deepen our viewpoint through their descriptions and discussions of Gothic design.

The expression “Gothic revival” is attested by 1869—the formulation can throw us off the scent, since it encompasses a nearly boundless spectrum of different

expressions—but the physical reality of nouveau Gothic began far before the wording was devised. Already in 1865, the phrase “[Gothic mania](#)” was in circulation. One major impetus for the British Gothic revival came from the Church Building Acts, which granted first one million pounds in 1818 and then an additional 500,000 in 1824 for raising up Anglican churches. These houses of worship are known as Commissioners’ churches, after the officials who were appointed to oversee them. [Many such buildings were erected](#) in Gothicizing styles. The legislation made for a heady brew, by propelling a spree of construction at precisely the moment when the romantics issued vociferous glorifications of the fashion for its sublimity. As is often the case later too, Gothic literature and architecture began to develop alongside each other. Horace Walpole’s novel *The Castle of Otranto* functioned as a hinge for the romantic [swing to the sublime](#). Later, Samuel Taylor Coleridge remarked on the [sublime actualities of Gothic art](#). The pronouncement of the English poet, literary critic, and philosopher was hardly to be unrepeatable.

Gothic has been extraordinary in provoking its leading adherents to compose manifestoes. These templates have both created partisans for the fashion and forged collective identities among them. In effect, revivalism in this manner has often become a creed. Sometimes it has even tottered on the cusp of becoming a religion. Romanticism spliced the early nineteenth-century stage of the revival with picturesqueness and passion, particularly love. Should we be surprised that in due course *Our Lady’s Tumbler* became embedded again and again in a Gothic framework? The medieval poem too was associated with all the same [numinous qualities and emotions](#). In short order, the sublimity of the style became interlaced with broader moral aspirations and civic virtues.

In the first of his lectures on European literature delivered in 1818, Coleridge urged his audience to contemplate the style, capping his exhortation with “a Gothic cathedral is the [petrification of our religion](#).” The Englishman here plays on “stone-making” or “making into stone,” the etymological meaning of the elements in this Latinate term for the fossilization of organic matter. The sentence also alludes to the old pun in Greek and Latin, going back to Jesus as reported in the [Gospel of Matthew](#), that the apostle Peter was the rock (*petra*) on which he founded his church. Being calcified could conjure up death and rigidity, but such a fate and fatality did not lie in store for Gothic as a mode in architecture, literature, and much else. On the contrary, by parsing the Latinate verbiage, people anticipated positively Bob Dylan’s later lyric, “[Everybody must get stoned](#).” Not long after, on the continent, Victor Hugo discerned in the architecture a capacity for [endlessly pliable recombination](#). The bones of Gothic may have been old, but they were anything but rigid and ossified.

In Britain, Gothic (or, once again, Gothick with a final *k*) prevailed within a few decades of Coleridge. A movement, named initially the Camden Society after the sixteenth-century historian William Camden, was founded in Cambridge in 1838. In 1845, rechristened the Ecclesiological Society, it was relocated to London. As the core of

its mission it undertook to publish texts of interest to antiquarians. Yet the members of the group had a larger philo-Gothic ambition, declared in 1844, of promoting the revival of Gothic parish churches. They also sought to coordinate the design of ecclesiastic buildings with sacramentalism. The last concept was bound up in the necessities of the worship, with attention to both liturgy and symbolism. A fundamental tenet of the Ecclesiologists posited “[Gothick is the only Christian architecture.](#)” They also made the Coleridgean dictum on petrification one of their own mottoes. Their work forms a complement, and sometimes a contrast, to the architecture and polemics of Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin. In the New World or, to be more precise, in the United States of America, [Gothic went through multiple stages](#) before the final decade of the nineteenth century. In general, the revival must be set within the context of late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century revivalism in general. As the United States affirmed its self-awareness as a nation, it looped through a succession of revivals. In a kind of architectural and stylistic dress-up that befitted a nation in its adolescence, it tried on for size a few major phases through which European culture had passed long before.

The Gothic revival in the architecture of America may be split into subsections, from the late eighteenth century down to the present. Here four will be mentioned. First, the Federal period from 1776 to 1840, which saw classicizing revivals, especially Greek, alongside of which emerged the first chapter of Gothicism. This early American Gothic, as it has been dubbed, relates more to romanticism than classicism. In fact, it could be regarded with only a scintilla of overstatement as anticlassicism—that is, it expresses a reaction against the Enlightenment as well as against the unbending canons of Greek and Roman revivals. The appetite for Gothic swelled a little at a time into the second half of the nineteenth century, and a second phase, christened the mature Gothic revival, extended from 1840 to the Civil War.

The third episode of Gothic took the world (Old, New, and beyond) by storm for more than two decades. High Victorian Gothic, with its characteristic ebullience of turrets and pinnacles, preponderated from the postbellum period into the early 1890s. By its very nature, the style was at least in aspiration historicizing and medievalizing. At the same time, it was radically and self-consciously innovative, even deliberately modern. During the 1870s and early 1880s, this brand of the fashion overlapped with another distinct form of medievalism in architecture, namely, Romanesque revival. Both fell into dismal desuetude as rapidly as they had achieved bragging rights.

The effervescence for Gothic endured considerably longer in the United States than elsewhere around the globe. In America, it had a fourth phase, the most successful of all. Influenced by the much-admired rectilinearity of Saint Paul’s School chapel in Concord, New Hampshire (see Fig. 3.14), the vogue that acquired the name of collegiate Gothic became deep-seated in many colleges from the late 1890s through the 1930s. In some of them it persisted far beyond that terminus. Indeed, even down to the present day it has maintained a stony [stranglehold](#) within select American university campuses.

The architecture of the Gothic revival—in truth, multiple revivals—forms part of the backdrop to the tale of the juggler. The destiny of the story would have been altogether different in the twentieth century without its reception in the United States, and the treatment of the narrative in America would have been something else entirely had the continent not been mantled in Gothic architecture. Somewhat circularly, the architectonics that is encoded within the tale enhanced its appeal as it was received and retouched during this time. The interplay between the story and an architectural setting stands to reason. As we will notice again and again, in precious few cultural movements have literature and architecture interacted to mutual benefit as has been the case in the repeated recrudescences of Gothicism.



Fig. 3.14 Postcard depicting the chapel of St. Paul's School, Concord, NH  
(Portland, ME: Hugh C. Leighton Co., ca. 1904–1907).

## John Ruskin and William Morris

The middle ages are to me the only ages...  
That miracle-believing faith produced good  
fruit—the best yet in the world.

—John Ruskin

Henry Adams's point of view in correlating the Middle Ages with his modern world had internal contradictions. In spite (or because?) of them, his outlook typifies in some ways *how well the medieval period went over* in general within the Anglo-American and especially the American ambit. Those responses were colored deeply and vividly by the fast-growing presence of medieval and sham-medieval buildings in culture. The medieval became normative and normalized in the United States.

His stint as a professor of history at Harvard in the 1870s coincided with the first sorties of scholars in America into the [study of medieval architecture](#). When he was engaged in teaching, Gothic was abundantly represented in buildings in many locales in North America. The style insinuated itself into churches, residences, universities, prisons, and even a yacht clubhouse (see Fig. 3.15). Yet he arrived at his views largely independently and even idiosyncratically, not in reaction to any American manifestations of Gothic revival architecture. Although not under the domination of any one writer or another, Adams was fully alive to the first-line British revivalist thinkers. One force strongly present in his own ratiocination was John Ruskin. The Englishman discharged his chief writings and lectures on architecture in a five-year fusillade, from 1849 to 1854. His thought came to be entwined, not always to their author's liking, with ideas advocated by his countryman, the artist and activist William Morris (see Fig. 3.16), and with the international Arts and Crafts movement. Ruskin, the foremost critic of the day on art and architecture, was credited in the British Empire as well as in the United States with two closely related contributions. One was to have given definitive voice to what could be called [Victorian medievalism](#). The other was to have provided the conceptual basis for one colorful flavor of High Victorian Gothic revival in architecture. In his honor, this architectural style was soon christened [Ruskinian Gothic](#).

During the first part of Ruskin's career, an inexorable force in England for Gothicism was Augustus Pugin. His achievements crescendoed in the interior design of Westminster, which had been ravaged by fire in 1834. The British government stipulated that the destroyed building, commonly known as the Houses of Parliament, be replaced with one designed in Gothic style. Pugin satisfied this proviso and then some, most famously with the clock tower known by fond synecdoche as Big Ben. Whatever detractors may say, time has told how warmly people can feel about Gothic revival buildings, especially the towering ones. To corroborate nationhood and nationalism, the authorities drafted into service the medieval past, as mediated through romanticism. At the same time, the architect took part in a movement that stretched out far beyond Britain alone. This broader medievalism encoded Gothic as a mindful antidote to a world of storm-tossed changes, particularly in industrialization, scientific discovery, technological development, and imperialist expansion.

Pugin's *Contrasts*, published in 1836, [put the case for Gothic revival](#) commandingly and colorfully before a public on both coastlines of the Atlantic Ocean (see Fig. 3.17). The American architect Ralph Adams Cram would later follow in his footsteps in advocating for building in the style: the two engaged in what could be called in the fullest sense constructive criticism. The Briton, in his book, first pitted the architecture of the Middle Ages against that of his own day. A key illustration contrasted the spire-laden urban landscape of a notional Catholic municipality in 1440 to the same town in 1840. After bringing his argument to a not-so-subtle (Gothic) point, Pugin then reached a not unexpected verdict that favored the fashion from four hundred years earlier. Finally, he extrapolated from the types of design to frame a judgment on the relative



quality of the societies that teamed up to spawn the medieval as an alternative to then-modern construction style. The short form of his message could be encapsulated as “Gothic good, modern architecture bad.” In his portrayal, he implied that the present Protestant city inflicted ignominy, as much moral as architectural, upon the previous Catholic one. Aesthetically, Pugin’s exacting attention to detail made apparent the latent capacity within Gothic for decorative complexity. Subsequent proponents of the manner leveraged this potential.

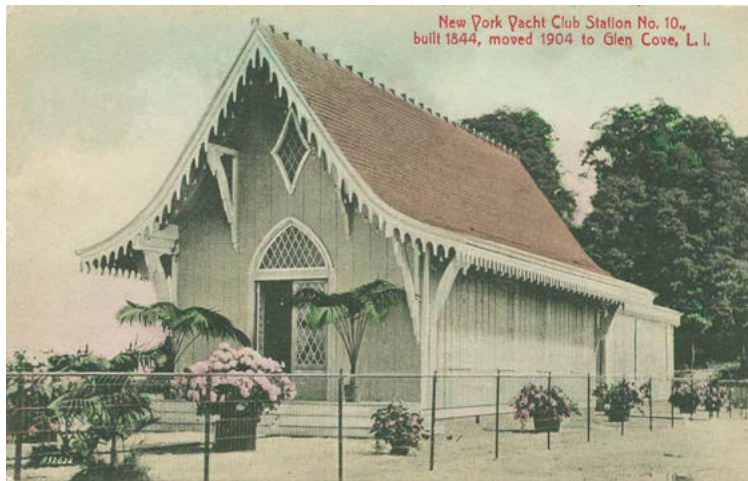


Fig. 3.15 Postcard depicting Station No. 10 of the New York Yacht Club, Glen Cove, NY (Glen Cove, NY: R. W. Harrold, ca. 1910).



Fig. 3.16 William Morris, age 53. Photograph by Frederick Hollyer, 1887. Reproduced in J. W. Mackail, *The Life of William Morris*, vol. 1 (London: Longmans, Green, 1899), frontispiece, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:William\\_Morris\\_age\\_53.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:William_Morris_age_53.jpg)



Fig. 3.17 Pugin's comparison of an industrial town in 1840 and a "Catholic town" in 1440. Illustration, ca. 1841. Published in Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin, *Contrasts; or, A Parallel between the Noble Edifices of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries and Similar Buildings of the Present Day: Shewing the Present Decay of Taste*, 2nd ed. (London: Charles Dolman, 1841), first figure after p. 104.

In *Contrasts*, Pugin asserted that medieval architecture transcended other forms because of its consanguinity with religion and morality. As a Roman Catholic convert, he sighted paganism in classicism; in Gothic, he located the physical expression of his own fervent faith. Going further, he envisioned the style as alloying beauty and functionality. On the whole, he ratified the tendency of the Ecclesiologists and others to espouse a sacramental Gothic.

In one way or another, the convictions held most fervidly by Pugin would resurface in most subsequent renewals of Gothic architecture. Nonetheless, his polemics and aesthetics were not greeted with universal accolades. To take one major example, John Ruskin damned this much shorter-lived contemporary of his, who had died while his own volume, *The Stones of Venice*, was in press: “[Employ him by all means](#), but on small work. Expect no cathedrals of him; but no one, at present, can design a better finial.” The witheringly faint and deliberately mordant praise carried even more weight for appearing in a book of extraordinary resonance.

Ruskinian ideas were also embroiled in the P.R.B., the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, which was founded in England in 1848 to proclaim the rejection of a mannerism that, it was maintained, had arisen from the art of [Raphael](#). In taking this stand, the members stuck to Ruskin’s verdict that [the Italian painter had been disloyal](#) to the faith in which he had been raised and trained. They took especial umbrage at his midcareer volte-face in painting from natural vistas to artificial interiors. By their lights, the artists who had preceded Raphael sought out lofty topics and treated them with a heedful naturalism as well as with what the P.R.B. regarded as honest-to-goodness medieval sentiment.

In the words of an article on William Morris in an American journal, the Pre-Raphaelites “[turned for aid and inspiration](#) to mediaevalism, as to the rightful and common inheritance of the modern nations.” Apparently, the bloodline that entitled descendants to a share in the legacy of the Middle Ages stretched even across the Atlantic. At the same time, the Pre-Raphaelites in the United States [took pains to emphasize](#) that the relationship of their British exemplars to the art and culture of the medieval period was not cringingly and creepingly servile.

The saturation of Henry Adams in Ruskin can be readily verified. Already during his professorship at Harvard University, he bought for his wife Clover leather-bound second editions of many works by the English art critic, and [read aloud from them](#). Date nights in the Adams homestead must have been memorable occasions. Writings of the same luminary from England perched atop the reading list of his novel *Democracy*’s book-devouring protagonist, Mrs. Madeleine Lee, a decade later. She mentioned Ruskin even before [Darwin and Stuart Mill](#). As contemporaries would have recognized, the Englishman well deserved this high place on the scorecard in the thoughts of the fiction’s female protagonist. In introducing his printing of Ruskin’s “The Nature of Gothic,” William Morris singled out this very segment from *The Stones of Venice* as a [landmark in nineteenth-century culture](#).

The Gothic revival was well underway in Britain before the French original of *Our Lady’s Tumbler* was first flushed out of hiding and printed in Gaston Paris and Paul Meyer’s *Romania*. In 1872 already, the British architect and furniture designer Charles Locke Eastlake published *A History of the Gothic Revival*. (Anyone predisposed to posit facilely an unchanging opposition between medievalism and modernity or even modernism should consider that this same designer was the first president of

what would later evolve into the [Royal Photographic Society](#).) The author's phrase, Gothic revival, has stuck like glue as a descriptor for the resurgence since the late eighteenth century of interest in the culture of the Middle Ages. The operative noun in the last phrase means especially but not exclusively architecture, art, and literature. A year later, in 1873, the English architect Sir Thomas Graham Jackson followed his predecessor's lead with the even more concisely titled *Modern Gothic Architecture*.

By the early 1870s, the style was already so entrenched as to warrant such books as Eastlake's and Jackson's. This fact may signal that the apogee of the Gothic upswing had already been passed by then. Yet a gap of more than one half century ensued before 1928, when the entire movement was assessed in [Kenneth Clark's \*Gothic Revival\*](#); its author himself pointed out the length of the interval. The further reality that all three of these studies on the Gothic comeback were by scholars from England is not inadvertent, since the revival originated in Britain. The art historian Clark hypothesized intriguingly that it was "[perhaps the one purely English movement](#) in the plastic arts."

[Medievalism](#) was a word that Ruskin salvaged from deprecatory use, and he put the concept into action. All the movements connected with him [medievalized](#), which is to say, all of them advanced medieval ideas and usages, and aimed to slap at least a quick and runny whitewash of the Middle Ages upon their contemporary world, perhaps especially in architecture and the decorative arts. To some degree, the trends rested on a belief that Gothic originated in a more devout and simpler Christian society. A corollary was a persuasion that renewing the style would facilitate a more engaged worship, imbued with deeper mystery and greater sincerity.

In England, the seeds for such perspectives had been sown already in the eighteenth century. In the late 1770s, John Carter stipulated that Gothic lent itself well to use in "religious structures." It rates as child's play, but at the same time deadly serious, to pick out among sundry styles "[which has the greatest effect on the mind](#); which pile of buildings conveys the more devout ideas; which fills the senses with the greatest attention of the heaven above us; which leads us more to contemplate on the life to come." In response, his one-word guttural was Gothic. This manner was regarded as a catalyst for godly feeling. Eventually, it would be seen to befit the spirituality that was expected of education.

Gothic bid fair to reign supreme. The most popular of the various stylistic reappearances in nineteenth-century Britain, it was regarded as top of the line for being indigenous and Christian. With the authority acquired by its many centuries of service to the Church, it was felt to deliver the most moral uplift amid the social downdrafts of the new urban existence. Of course, not all the attraction of the style lay in religion. Simultaneously, it crooked its finger seductively to both established and wannabe aristocrats because of its connections with family history and heraldry.

In the United States, the situation was both snarled and enriched by the upsurge in Catholicism through immigration. Further complications arose from changes within already established religions. The Gothic and Romanesque revivals coincided with

developments that would have been unthinkable within Protestantism [before the mid-nineteenth century](#). Protestant denominations adopted elements that until then would have been spurned for their Roman Catholic associations. These accessories included cross-shaped buildings, stained glass, crosses, candles, flowers, and choir vestments. Previously such unaustere features had been largely absent from the [frippery-unfriendly](#) American Protestant churches. Now the doors were flung open to Gothic. Even the most elemental wooden-box place of worship was likely to sport a pointed arch or two.

In North America, who gives a second thought today if a Baptist, Congregationalist, or Presbyterian church has the shape of a cross, or if its windows and portals take the form of pointed arches? Yet pause to reflect upon the oddity: branches of Christianity that arose to no small degree in reaction against the ornamentation of Catholicism evolved to accept much of it once again. If we brought forward from early eighteenth-century America almost any non-Catholic Christian, frog-marched the individual into one of these cruciform churches, and let his or her eyes alight upon the accouterments, shock would be the mildest reflex.

On both American continents, as well as in most other extra-European locations, all the historicist revivals instated fashions in places where the putative originals of those times had never existed. The United States had no fifth-century Athens, no ancient Rome, and no European Middle Ages. As a result, nowhere in the country could there be resuscitated what had never been there before—but that bump in the road did not stop anyone from trying. Yet the phrase “Gothic arrival” describes architecture that was implanted in the New World not as a conscious revival but rather as a continuance of a still-living tradition. The manner arrived early from Britain, before the coroners of seemingly dead-on-arrival building styles would declare the original legally deceased. Bits and pieces had never been forgotten in the construction techniques and architectural repertoire that had been handed down from the late medieval stages of Gothicism. These remnants leaked into the colonies in the first couple of centuries as Europeans settled in America.

The most convincing attestation of early Gothic arrival in colonial America is the Virginian church known unofficially as [Saint Luke's](#) (see Fig. 3.18). Dated as early as 1632, the brickwork of this place of worship contains crow-stepped gables, lancet windows, and simple buttresses and turrets. Yet even when added together with such [traces in other surviving buildings](#), the total hardly constitutes rousing evidence that a robust Gothic survival was transmitted to the American colonies of Britain. Furthermore, these features of construction give no sign of having been invested with any special religious valences that would have put viewers at the time in mind of the medieval Church. Thus, they abrogated no principles or policies of Protestantism in the New World at the time.

The seventeenth-century reform movement of Puritanism established bases for American life and attitudes that remain fixed in many locales and minds even today. Even so, the lock they imposed on ecclesiastical building style loosened everlastingly



in the second half of the nineteenth century. In Britain, the Ecclesiological movement generated pressure for exact replication of genuine or supposedly Gothic features in architecture. In America, the turn toward imitation of medieval cathedrals and churches allowed for more fanciful architectural recombination. Along with the other changes, Gothic was suddenly disinfected of the taint it had carried. The fashion no longer needed to be denied and repudiated as a sullied trapping of Catholicism.



Fig. 3.18 Newport Parish Church (“St. Luke’s Church”), Benns Church, VA. Photograph by David King, 2008, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Newport\\_parish\\_west\\_facade.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Newport_parish_west_facade.jpg)

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The distinct filaments of Ruskinian medievalism intertwine in the reception of Ruskin’s “The Nature of Gothic.” These pages, set in the so-called *Golden type*, were printed in 1892 by William Morris. They count among the first items he published at the *Kelmscott Press* (see Fig. 3.19). Flagging the importance of this chapter from Ruskin’s *The Stones of Venice*, *the great designer recalled* scintillatingly the power of its impact nearly forty years earlier when it appeared originally. From the vantage point of the fin de siècle, Morris extolled the essay as “one of the very few necessary and inevitable utterances of this century.”

Decades later, Kenneth Clark wrote: “*The best spirits of the Revival*—Pugin, Ruskin, William Morris—turned from the reform of art to the reform of society, from the advocacy of dead decorative forms to that of undying principles of social order.” The central person in this trinity detected in medieval society a consolidation of a “*truly Christian and perfect system*” and “freedom of thought” for “every workman who struck the stone” that accounted in turn for the perfection of the cathedrals. Similarly, Morris wished to preserve medieval architecture as an inspiration to the Victorian present. In consonance with that objective, he became in 1877 a founding member of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings.

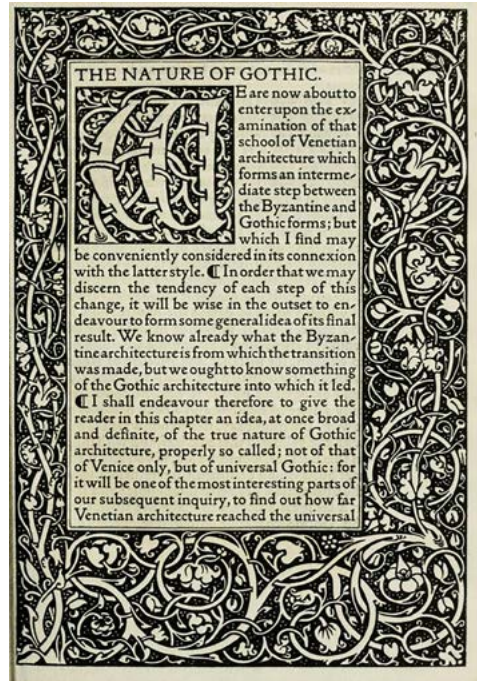


Fig. 3.19 John Ruskin, *The Nature of Gothic: A Chapter of The Stones of Venice, with a preface by William Morris* (London: George Allen, printed at the Kelmscott Press, 1892), 1.

Morris embodied a potent blend of charisma, aesthetics, and social reform. Like Ruskin, he lashed out vehemently against the industrialism, laissez-faire free enterprise, and overall societal structure of the nineteenth century. Without a jot of fondness, he nicknamed his own days the “Age of Commercialism.” With nostalgia for imagined better times that had been discarded, he invoked the medieval period to criticize his own by way of contrast. Before arriving at his personal brand of “[practical socialism](#),” he took Ruskin as the master from whom he “learned to give form to [his] discontent.” The disgruntlement that he nursed consisted in the friction between two emotions: a love of producing beautiful things and a “[hatred of modern civilization](#).” His reaction against modernity led him to espouse [simplicity](#). He countered the ills of a hands-off approach to market capitalism by implementing through artistry and artisanry his own form of a hands-on medievalism.

The great man’s antimodernism resulted in the self-contradictory inconsistency that he was an antimaterialist who loved things. He favored objects that attained technical rather than technological perfection. Far from being factory-made, they were fashioned by handicraft. Etymologically, *manufacture* implies crafting by hand, but as the nineteenth century wore on, the Latin derivative lost its original sense. The two processes of handicraft and manufacture drifted apart. The virtues of working manually were the paramount message of Morris’s “Art and Industry in the Fourteenth

Century.” The Middle Ages provided the beauty and the society that the author failed to discern in the industrialism and Victorianism of his own times. Chivalry and courtliness had succumbed to crass commerce and what in the United States would be called [Babbitt](#). In defense of the medieval era, the English designer and writer took a stand from the mid-1870s on against the restoration, or supposed restoration, of medieval buildings.

In 1890, Morris wrote a visionary novel entitled *News from Nowhere: A Utopian Romance*. His thinking in this volume followed hard on the heels of his lecture in 1889 on “Gothic Architecture.” In hindsight, the book could be considered a manifesto for the Arts and Crafts movement. The frontispiece flaunts a [wood engraving](#) that depicts [Kelmscott Manor](#), Morris’s home (see Fig. 3.20). The designer first clapped eyes upon the house in 1871, and later leased it with the artist and author, Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

The fiction envisioned a society that would effectively constitute a new Middle Ages, at least as Morris pictured that time to have been. In this hypothetical universe, federated communes would fend for themselves through craftwork. These idealized communities would allow their inhabitants to cultivate manual skills alongside intellectual ones. The entire notion was unrealizably starry-eyed. All the same, it undeniably inspired his contemporaries on both seaboard of the Atlantic who were already or would soon become the craftsmen in the largely uncoordinated Arts and Crafts movement. Like the whole vogue, [Morris’s influence penetrated deeply](#) in the United States and particularly in Boston.

Adams was transformed and even transfigured much more by Ruskin than by Morris. Bear in mind that both Englishmen had died before *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres* came into print: Morris met his maker in 1896, Ruskin in 1900. The American was familiar with *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, from 1849, and other screeds by the same author (see Fig. 3.21). He would have been especially drawn to Ruskin, since they shared a susceptibility for the same strain of Gothic. The architecture known specifically as Ruskinian owed much explicitly to the style [as it evolved in Normandy](#), which Adams much admired. To look in a very different direction from medieval architecture, both Ruskin and Adams incorporated similarly into their “social prophecy” a smidgen or more of reaction to the science and technology of their day, [especially thermodynamics](#).

On the topic of physics, Ruskin exerted no small force upon close friends in Adams’s inmost social circle. [Clarence King](#) was an early spokesman for the Englishman in the United States. In turn, the American mesmerized Ruskin. On one occasion, the world-famous art critic went so far as to offer the charismatic geologist from the New World the pick of his two finest paintings by J. M. W. Turner. Upon snapping up both canvases, King summed up his acquisition with the bon mot “[one good Turner deserves another](#).” As one of the Five of Hearts, the undaunted geologist also [served as a conduit](#) to both Henry and Clover Adams for Pre-Raphaelitism, since he belonged to a group that transmitted ideas of the movement to the United States. Based in New York, the members of this society were designated popularly as the [American](#)

**Pre-Raphaelites.** John La Farge, another intimate of Adams, also came under the influence of both Ruskin and the Pre-Raphaelites. In 1857 he studied the works of the Pre-Raphaelites, and in 1873 he became personally acquainted with such **outstanding members of the P.R.B.** as Ford Maddox Brown, Edward Burne-Jones, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and the sister of the last-mentioned, Christina Rossetti.

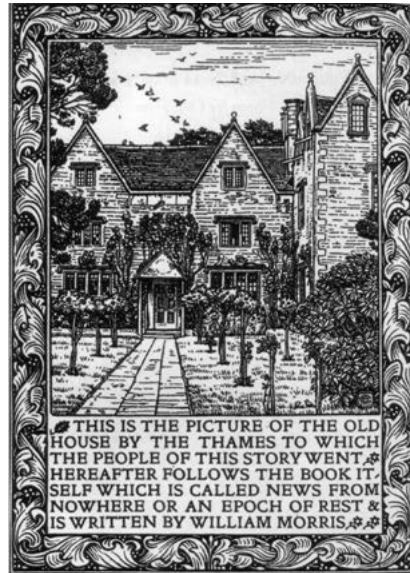


Fig. 3.20 Kelmscott Manor. Wood engraving, 1893. William Morris, from a drawing by C. M. Gere. Published in William Morris, *News from Nowhere* (Hammersmith, UK: Kelmscott Press, 1893), frontispiece.



Fig. 3.21 John Everett Millais, *John Ruskin*, 1853–1854. Oil on canvas, 71.3 × 60.8 cm. Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Millais\\_Ruskin.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Millais_Ruskin.jpg)



## Richardsonian Romanesque

During Adams's shift as a professor, Memorial Hall at Harvard University was under construction steadily (see Fig. 3.22). Its cornerstone was laid in 1870, its dining hall and vestibule were dedicated in 1874, the large portion of it known as Sanders Theater was opened in 1875, and [its tower was completed in 1877](#). The structure is often credited as one of the foremost examples of Ruskinian or Victorian Gothic outside England. La Farge created [stained glass windows](#) for it. Still more importantly, this colossal edifice to honor the Unionists who died in the Civil War was designed by William R. Ware and Henry Van Brunt. Beyond the [Ruskinian influences](#), Van Brunt was, significantly, a translator of Viollet-le-Duc. In fact, he published in English the Frenchman's [Discourses on Architecture](#). His translation came into print in 1875, during construction of the commemorative building. His presentation of Viollet-le-Duc's views on architecture and architectural education became by way of being a bible for American architects of the time.

Memorial Hall honored Harvard students and graduates who were lost on the Union side in the ghastly civil war within the United States of America. It well repays the effort to pause and consider the style in which the edifice was built. The architects turned to medieval European cathedrals of one sort or another as their ultimate basis for inspiration in memorializing the dead in a consummately American war—one that defined the very nature of the United States as a federation. In design, the vast building is a great church, with nave, crossing, transepts, chancel, and choir. All these components are capped by a vertigo-inducing central tower. Remarkably, a structure that could have overpowered the rest of the campus by dictating the style of all future constructions in its vicinity had no such effect. For being a memorial, it was left standing as other Gothic constructions were systematically obliterated. In fact, Harvard eventually razed even the medieval fantasy that had been Gore Hall. At the same time, the house of prayer across Massachusetts Avenue that was heavily used by the University for formal ceremonies became de-Gothicized. The part of Cambridge that turned around the axis of the Yard was rendered much more classical Georgian and Colonial, as well as much more classically and Colonially New England-y, just as Yale and Princeton Universities were being unified through collegiate Gothic.

Between 1872 and 1877, at the same time as Memorial Hall was being erected, the Episcopal Trinity Church on Copley Square in Boston was built. Its designer was Henry Hobson Richardson. In 1874, this giant of American architecture moved from New York to Brookline, a municipality adjacent to the Hub. Thus, he was close geographically to Adams during the latter's Cantabrigian years. The heavy-set Richardson, among medievalizers of his day, was larger than life in both physique and character (see Fig. 3.23). His extraordinary corpulence was due to a disease that contributed to his premature death. Winning the competition for the church caused him to rocket to national fame and to become the central player in a phase that was regarded as being an ["American Renaissance"](#) in architecture.





Fig. 3.22 Postcard depicting Memorial Hall, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA (Portland, ME: Hugh C. Leighton Co., ca. 1904–1907).

Trinity has been called “the most monumental expression of the nineteenth century’s search for a [comprehensive Protestant church](#)” (see Fig. 3.24). In its conception, alongside Byzantine influences Richardson drew upon French Romanesque of Auvergne and other sources. What emerged was the so-called Romanesque revival style, known more commonly in acknowledgment of its creator’s prominence as Richardsonian Romanesque. The adjective *Romanesque* was brought into English in 1819 as [an architectural term](#), specifically in contradistinction to Gothic, by the English antiquarian William Gunn. It has been applied consistently to round-arched architecture of the postclassical period, but its usage has been narrowed to the medieval building style that preceded Gothic. In the case of Trinity Church, as of many other places of worship built in this fashion, the commitment to Romanesque revival signaled a deliberate effort to reach back to the origins of Christianity and to realize ideals of Christian cooperation associated with the early church. Richardson’s achievement was to demonstrate how successfully Romanesque could be adapted to the needs of modern buildings. By making this demonstration with brio, he paved the way for the Gothic revivals that followed in the United States.

The Richardsonian Romanesque of Trinity Church resembled the style in which the bulky architect designed and built the adjoining mansions of John Hay and Henry Adams (see Figs. 3.25 and 3.26). The double house was [located on Lafayette Square](#) in Washington, separated from the White House by little more than the north lawn. Both Hay and Adams would dwell in these residences until their deaths. For Adams, who assumed occupancy of his portion only on December 30, 1885, the new home was a refuge from the place where Clover had ended her days. Richardson himself died [less than four months later](#).



Fig. 3.23 H. H. Richardson, in monastic attire, with book and flagon. Photograph by George Collins Cox, ca. 1875. Boston, Historic New England Library and Archives. Image courtesy of the Historic New England Library and Archives, Boston. All rights reserved.



Fig. 3.24 Postcard depicting Trinity Church, Boston, Massachusetts (Boston: The Metropolitan News Co., ca. 1904–1916).



Fig. 3.25 John Hay House, Washington, DC. Photograph by Harris & Ewing, ca. 1910–1920. Washington, DC, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.



Fig. 3.26 Henry Adams House, Washington, DC. Photograph by Frances Benjamin Johnston, ca. 1900. Washington, DC, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

Adams and the future designer had known each other as undergraduates at Harvard. Both were born in 1838, both graduated in the class of 1858. Yet [they became fast friends only later](#). Whenever exactly we pinpoint the start of meaningful interchanges between the two men over the Middle Ages, Adams himself avowed, while researching *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres*, [a direct debt to Richardson](#) for his attachment to the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

Clover crafted a careful photographic portrait of Richardson, and she participated actively in conversations and [negotiations with him](#). Her brother Ned Hooper had played a leading role in persuading the architect to build—in Richardsonian Romanesque, of course—Sever Hall for Harvard, from 1878 to 1880 (see Fig. 3.27). This beautiful instructional building has been seen to have [loosely anticipated](#) features of the Adams and Hay houses on Lafayette Square.

It would be very easy to miss the point (especially since it is rounded here) that thanks to Richardson's design, Adams spent the Washington phases in his writing of *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres* snuggled within pseudo-twelfth-century architecture. He resided inside a bit of ersatz Middle Ages that had been erected opposite the White House. Was the medievalism of his home nothing but stylistic, or did it signify something grander and more special? Was the double house by way of being a Grail Castle, concretizing spiritual aspirations that the presidency had seemingly lost forevermore, the more so in the wake of two assassinations?

By no stretch of the imagination could Adams pass as an architect himself, although later in life he plunged into the development of medieval construction techniques. But at this stage, he was already well versed enough in building history to invoke Viollet-le-Duc knowledgeably in support of his preference not to have figural or symbolic carvings on the façade of his new residence. At the same time, Richardson, an old opponent of the Frenchman's theories about medieval architecture and art, could still more eruditely [refute the invocation](#) of the foreign designer. His friend, a professional through and through, stiff-armed Adams: "Viollet-le-Duc has been warping your naturally well-balanced perceptions; the poor man never understood and was never able to create an architecture... It is a common saying in Paris that [even well-bred horses shy at his buildings](#)." Architects have never been overly benevolent in their evaluations of each other—but what they have lacked in kindheartedness, they have often made up in wittiness.

The construction of Trinity Church in Boston was overseen by Phillips Brooks, a second cousin of Adams. The renowned sermonizer officiated as rector there from 1869 until his consecration as Episcopalian Bishop of Massachusetts in 1891. Alongside his many other distinctions, the man of the cloth worked hand in glove with Harvard University. In Adams's *Esther*, the character of Stephen Hazard is modeled full on upon him. The fictitious minister is portrayed as championing interest in all sorts of exotic art, including both East Asian and medieval. A strange statue by August Saint-Gaudens to honor the real prelate holds court outside Trinity Church. The work contrasts starkly with the highly successful memorial to Clover in Washington by the same sculptor.



The statuary grouping provoked the spleen of the former Harvard president Charles W. Eliot and the unreconstructed medievalizer Ralph Adams Cram. Its composition features a full-bloodedly male Christ, bearded and cowled, positioned behind Phillips Brooks. Now an Episcopal saint, the peerless preacher Brooks is represented to show to best effect his imposing height. Standing stalwartly with left hand on the pulpit and right hand aloft, he embodies a strain of Christianity—broad-shouldered, bull-necked, and burly almost to the point of seeming to be on steroids—that Henry Adams never sought or at least never found for himself (see Fig. 3.28). “**Muscular Gothic**” existed as a concept, if only tenuously, but not as an actuality he would ever have applauded.



Fig. 3.27 Postcard depicting Sever Hall, Harvard University, Boston, Massachusetts (Boston: The Metropolitan News Co., ca. 1904–1916).



Fig. 3.28 Statue of Phillips Brooks by Augustus Saint-Gaudens outside of Trinity Church, Boston, Massachusetts. Photograph by Wikimedia user Daderot, 2007, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Phillips\\_Brooks\\_by\\_Augustus\\_Saint-Gaudens,\\_Trinity\\_Church,\\_Boston.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Phillips_Brooks_by_Augustus_Saint-Gaudens,_Trinity_Church,_Boston.jpg)



## Saint John the Divine and Trinity Church

It speaks to the close-knit worlds of American medievalism that both Christopher Grant La Farge, eldest son of Adams's dear friend John, and Ralph Adams Cram, who supplied the introduction to *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres* when it was commercially printed in 1913, contributed separately as architects to the design of Saint John the Divine, the cathedral of the Episcopal diocese in New York (see Fig. 3.29). La Farge *files* wove together Romanesque and Norman styles in work that began in 1892 and continued until 1911. At that point [Cram took over](#) with a French rayonnant Gothic design. Reconciling the two designs and constructions made for a hard row to hoe.

The timing of the groundbreaking looks very significant in retrospect. In a British context, the year 1892 could be seen as coinciding with a slippage in the cultural centrality of the Middle Ages with the death of Alfred, Lord Tennyson, a poet who drew much inspiration from medieval legends. Not so in the United States—ground was broken for Saint John the Divine on December 27, the feast day of the holy man, in the year that marked the quadricentennial anniversary of Christopher Columbus's fateful landfall.

The rendering of the projected Saint John the Divine that was published in an issue in the first year of the *Architectural Record* shows a towering edifice, worthy of any that Adams would have seen on his cathedral tours of France (see Fig. 3.30). In its grandeur it was intended to be the largest Gothic structure on the face of the earth—and to make even New York City, for all its sky-high modernity, into a cathedral town, albeit on an American scale. Despite being uncompleted, the great church remains to this day [the largest in the world](#).

The final blueprints for edifices such as Saint John the Divine emerged from long and often emotive [negotiations](#). The debate was still more heated in this instance, since the church aspired to the status of a national cathedral. We must remember that contention over the design began in New York more than a century before the completion of what has since become officially the National Cathedral in the District of Columbia. The cornerstone of the house of prayer was laid only in 1907. At that point it was not dedicated as such, but rather as the Cathedral Church of Saint Peter and Saint Paul in the city and diocese of Washington.

In Henry Adams's *Esther* from 1884, the artist Wharton criticizes the original scheme for an imagined cathedral to be put up in New York. The character, based on John La Farge, says, "I would like... to go back to the age of beauty and put a Madonna in the heart of their church. [The place has no heart.](#)" It sheds no small light on the consistency of Adams's passions and insights across the decades of his life that already at this juncture, just over two decades before his *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres*, he equates an image of the Virgin Mary with the innermost essence of ecclesiastical architecture. But the building at issue in the novel published two decades earlier was modeled upon Trinity Church in Boston, which Henry and Clover Adams [often visited](#) during its construction when he taught at Harvard (see Fig. 3.31). Similar

wars of words took place about Saint John the Divine in New York City, but only years after the publication of *Esther*.

Trinity Church belonged to a radically medievalizing makeover that Boston performed upon itself in the waning nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The largest urban conflagration ever to strike the City on a Hill was the Great Fire of 1872. In its immediate aftermath, the erection of edifices in revival fashion kicked into high gear. Many new medievaesque buildings that sprang up afterward were demolished less than one half century later. Take, for example, two that faced each other at the corners of Boylston and Tremont Streets. One was the Gothic Masonic Temple (see Fig. 3.32), which after being damaged by a blaze was torn down to make way for a fresh structure that was put up in 1898–1899. The other was called “the Italian-Gothic style” Hotel Boylston (see Fig. 3.33), which stood from 1871 to 1894.



Fig. 3.29 Postcard depicting the Cathedral of St. John the Divine  
(New York: Frank E. Cooper, early twentieth century).

For a few decades, the metropolis of Boston made its newfound and pervasive medievalishness a badge of honor, even or especially while publicizing itself as a lamp of liberty, learning, and culture in the New World (see Fig. 3.34). Yet most of Beantown’s modern Middle Ages was not to last long. One of the pride and joys of the Gothic past that have since disappeared from Boston is notably the original [Museum of Fine Arts](#) (see Figs. 3.35 and 3.36). This High Victorian Gothic edifice in Ruskinian style opened on July 4, 1876, a strangely medieval means of marking the hundredth birthday of the United States of America. The date fell during Adams’s tenure at Harvard. Before the first decade of the twentieth century had ended, the building had been dismantled to make way for the present-day Copley Plaza Hotel. The Museum of Fine Arts moved to its present location in 1909, the centennial of Abraham Lincoln’s birth.



Fig. 3.30 "Interior view of design submitted for Cathedral of St. John the Divine."  
 Design by A. Potter and R. H. Robertson, New York. Published in  
*The Architectural Record* 1.3 (January–March, 1892): 260.



Fig. 3.31 Trinity Church, Boston, Massachusetts. Photograph, ca. 1877–1895.  
 Photographer unknown. Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Library.



Fig. 3.32 Masonic Temple, Boston, Massachusetts. Photograph, 1875. Photographer unknown. Boston, Boston Public Library, Pictorial Archive.



Fig. 3.33 Hotel Boylston. Photograph, ca. 1870–1879. Photographer unknown. Boston, Boston Public Library, Pictorial Archive.



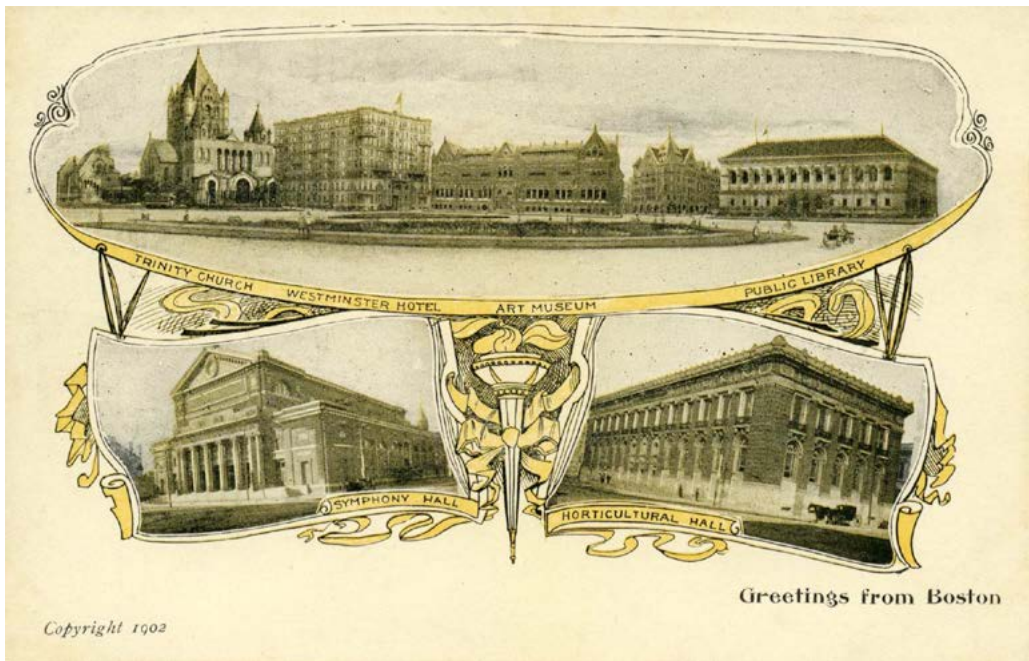


Fig. 3.34 Postcard depicting various Gothic-inspired structures of Boston, Massachusetts (1902).

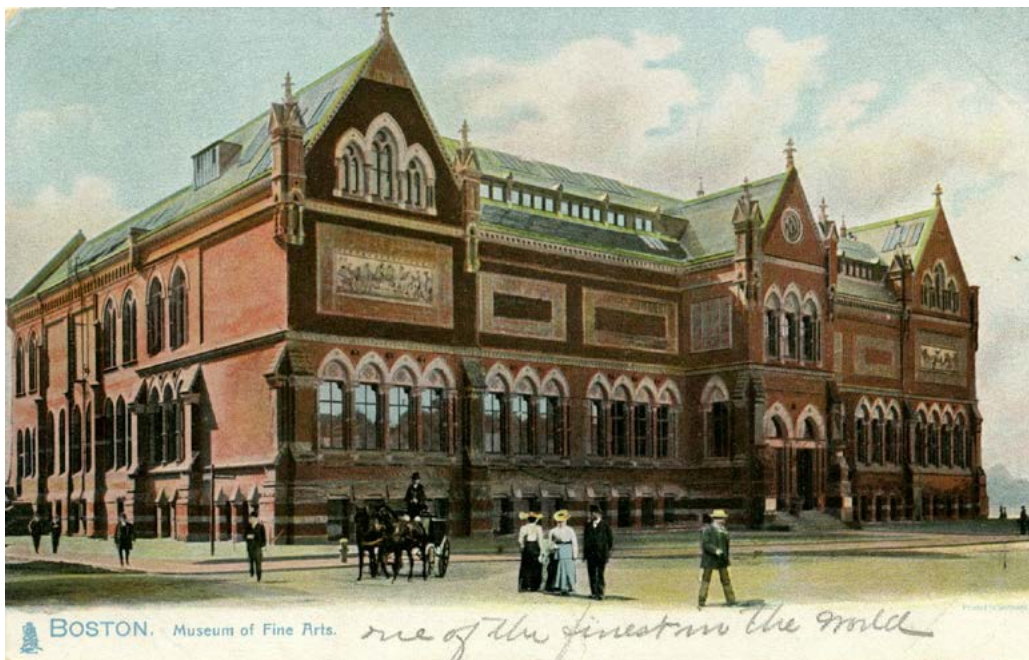


Fig. 3.35 Postcard depicting the former Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Massachusetts (London: Raphael Tuck & Sons, 1903).





Fig. 3.36 Postcard depicting the former Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Massachusetts (New York: Souvenir Post Card Co., early twentieth century).

## Cathedral Culture

People in those old times had convictions; we  
moderns only have opinions. And it needs  
more than a mere opinion to erect such a  
Gothic cathedral.

—Heinrich Heine

By the end of the nineteenth century, Henry Adams was a recognized purveyor of cathedral culture to his fellow Americans. From Paris, he advised the formidable Isabella Stewart Gardner about books on such great churches as well as about purchases of art, including even [thirteenth-century colored glass](#). Although he had direct contact with Auguste Rodin, Adams engaged with him as a client purchasing art objects rather than as a fellow admirer of Gothic architecture. The oeuvre of the French sculptor pays frequent tribute to his lifelong love for Gothic cathedrals and sculptural conventions, as well as to the images wrested from poets of the Gothic period such as Dante. Rodin's stone sculpture [La Cathédrale](#) or The Cathedral represents the right hands of two different people (see Fig. 3.37). Although the fingertips do not make contact, the hands form an enclosure. The fingers resemble rib vaulting in a church; the palms, the sides of the nave; and the thumbs, a portal. The area within them is a sacred space of God and community. The composition has been interpreted as betokening hands raised

in prayer and worship. Simultaneously, it fashions of the same body parts a shape generally suggestive of five Gothic arches.

In supremely dignified fashion, Rodin's carving achieves the effect familiar to everyone who knows the child's rhymed fingerplay in which the fingers are first knit together ("Here's the church"), then both index fingers are raised ("and here's the steeple"), the thumbs are pulled apart ("Open the doors"), and the fingertips of the still-knitted fingers are wriggled within ("and see all the people").

Adams's *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres* and Rodin's *The Cathedral* have no direct connection. Rodin did not produce the object until 1908, four years after the initial printing of Adams's tome. What is more, he originally called it *The Arch of Alliance*. But he made his preliminary foray into Gothic in an essay published in 1905, which would have caught Adams's attention. Not until 1914 did the artist publish a book, his only one, on *the Gothic cathedrals of France*, with his impressions and sketches of more than a half dozen (see Fig. 3.38). The general parallels between the reactions of the scholar and the sculptor to Gothic architecture and the Virgin Mary run strikingly close. For all that, exactly as was the case with Henry Adams and Mark Twain, the resemblances speak far less to the pinioned relations of source and influence than to the common responses of two very different souls who were both *conditioned by the atmosphere of their times*.

The same could be said of the French novelist *Joris-Karl Huysmans* (see Fig. 3.39). Adams was intimately acquainted with at least some of his writings, and the two shared an engrossment in the Middle Ages. Without interruption, the Frenchman manifested for more than a quarter century a passion for medieval arts, including the Gothic architecture of cathedrals and monasteries, painting and manuscript illumination, and Gregorian chant. Like iron shavings to a magnet, he was drawn to medieval religious practice and theology, from mysticism through Satanism, and to iconography. Huysmans's highly controversial and even scandalous *Là-Bas* was first printed in toto in 1891. Called in English *Down There* or, not at all literally, *The Damned*, the novel follows a fictitious writer as he turns at once toward worship of Satan and the study of the Middle Ages. This Durtal, debauched in ways typical of fin-de-siècle decadence, feels revulsion for the cratered crassness of contemporary France. The malcontent rake and roué within the fiction is modeled loosely upon the author himself. In the view of this (anti)hero, society has gone downhill steadily since the medieval period. In 1898, Huysmans published *La Cathédrale*, a bestseller set at Chartres and centered upon it, as the final volume in the novelistic trilogy dealing with Durtal. *Adams quotes from it extensively* more than once in *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres*. In 1900, the French author tackled writing the life of *Saint Lydwine of Schiedam*. Huysmans's subsequent conversion to Catholicism and his entry as an oblate into a monastery of Trappists, a branch of the Order of Cistercians, were well known. Printed too late to influence Adams in his long disquisition on the Middle Ages and modernity, however, was Huysmans's 1906 *The Crowds of Lourdes*, on the Marian cult based in that French town.



Fig. 3.37 Auguste Rodin, *The Cathedral*, 1908. Stone, 64 × 29.5 × 31.8 cm. Paris, Musée Rodin.  
Reproduced on postcard (Philadelphia: K. F. Lutz, early twentieth century).

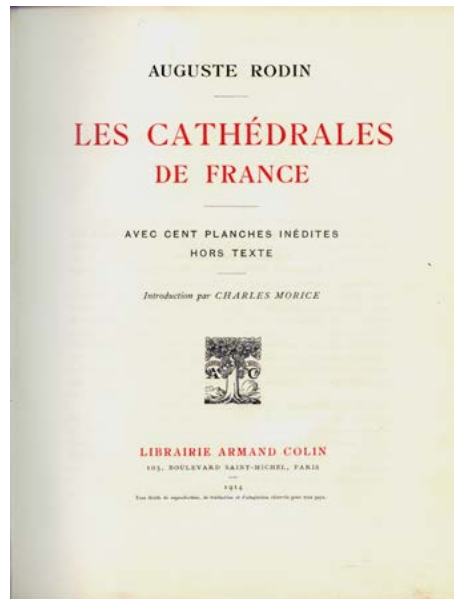


Fig. 3.38 Title page of Auguste Rodin, *Les cathédrales de France* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1914).

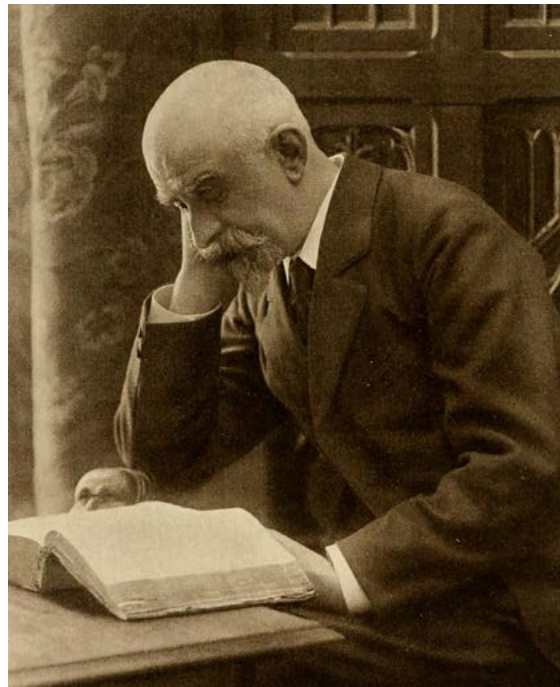


Fig. 3.39 Joris-Karl Huysmans. Photograph, ca. 1895. Photographer unknown, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Joris\\_Karl\\_Huysmans.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Joris_Karl_Huysmans.jpg)

## Kenneth Clark

*Mont Saint Michel and Chartres* was composed by a man whose family background invested him with threads of culture that led continuously back to the Enlightenment. At the same time, he was not deterred by his advanced years from looking penetratingly at the latest trend lines in technology, politics, international relations, and aesthetics in the specific reflex of modernity that was just beginning to jell around him. In this brave new world, Gothicism could look thoroughly outdated. Beyond hoary age, it had against it the even harder strike that some people found it flagrantly ugly. When the British art historian Kenneth Clark published his first book *The Gothic Revival* in 1928, he did not moderate his words in characterizing the architectural movement he studied as incongruent with the [palette and standards of his own times](#). He took to task the Gothic revival in its earlier manifestations in Britain for [relating poorly to its environs](#)—to the street, as he put it. By the time Clark wrote, the fad was long over in Britain. His final stocktaking was essentially “good riddance.”

The clarion call to rally against Gothic blared early, even an ocean away. Henry Adams’s brother Brooks had already posited that the imaginative man of the Middle Ages had been dislodged by the economic man of his day. To his mind, the dislocation had detrimental consequences for all art, but perhaps especially architecture. Soulless patrons and unthinking architects took designs that should have been laden with spiritual weight and [applied them to purely commercial functions](#). This invective against Gothic revival applied especially to the imposition of the movement upon commercial and municipal buildings, anticipating closely what Kenneth Clark wrote three decades later. The epilogue of *The Gothic Revival* offers a razor-sharp dissection of the vogue in England and concludes with the exclamation “[What a wilderness of deplorable architecture!](#)”

Brooks Adams’s hereditary impulse to dark doomsaying and Kenneth Clark’s drive to be droll may have induced them to exceed what is fair or true in assessing architecture contemporary with them. Not all of the Gothic revival was regrettable. To pursue a point relevant solely to Clark, not all Englishmen could afford an authentic medieval Gothic domicile of their own. An old legal doctrine holds that every man’s home is his castle, but not everyone can afford the sort of high-rent stronghold Clark himself owned in Saltwood Castle. Gothic revivals could not have succeeded in having mass appeal or present-day relevance if they had been restricted to bona fide medieval originals and if they had vetoed medievalizing that took the form of newly made medievaesque buildings, objects, art, music, and literature.

It would be ludicrous to go to the other extreme: far from all neo-Gothic architecture achieved a resounding success. Yet some of it did, much more than Brooks Adams could have foreseen when he put pen to paper or than Kenneth Clark would have understood to give credit years later. With the benefit of hindsight, it seems mistaken to frame the issue in bald terms of a singular revival, as the Englishman does in the title



to his book. On the contrary, multiple renewals and renegotiations of the style took place. The last great resurgence may not have held much significance for England, but it mattered enormously elsewhere. Whether Clark was right or not in restricting the Gothic revival to his country, it bears noting that in his entire book he [does not refer once](#) to a single specimen of collegiate or skyscraper Gothic in the United States. In 1928, a sheerly Anglocentric standpoint on Gothicism in architecture could still be justified—but only in England. By then Gothic had long since gone global.

Gothic rebirths or restarts—with the plurals being very deliberate—have had many adversaries, although the opposition has been intransigent since modernism. It has been comparable to the rejection of representational art by many abstract artists, or of classical music by countless modern composers. Furthermore, when revivals have taken place in locations that lacked their own Middle Ages in a Western European sense, they have risked being disliked and disrespected by perfectionists who would rather not see the style exported for imitation. Yet in a climate of greater eclecticism, it would be intellectually foolhardy now not to look across the Channel to the European mainland and across the Atlantic to America, especially the United States. Even such a broadened purview may be too restricted. If time and space allowed, there would be sound reason for endeavoring to set the fashion in a world context. We could go so far as to think in terms of global Gothic. For centuries, the style has been freighted wherever European culture and commodities have been carried.

Much of Clark's cannonade against the later Gothic revivals is fair, especially in application to the English environment in which he was writing, and on which he was focused. In addition, he found an echo in a countryman who vituperated the use of revival architecture to Gothicize universities, railing against what he regarded as the pseudolearning and over-refinement that led pedants to house their operations in a [sham Gothic shell](#). Still, such belittlers miss the mark or even fail to see it at all where most collegiate Gothic in America is concerned. In fact, the style as it took shape in the United States had the express virtue of rebelling against the American manifestation of what Clark loathed. This manner of medievalism rejected the street as canyon between skyscrapers. By way of steel and glass, those lofty buildings translated the reach of lucre and power toward the open skies. Collegiate Gothic, with towers of stone, was meant to embody different perspectives on the heavens as well as on the relationship between humanity and habitat. Furthermore, it was intended to apply those outlooks not universally but within specific contexts of learning and spirituality.

The main feature held in common by all iterations of campus Gothic has been a sense, sometimes unarticulated, that institutions of higher learning deserved this medieval architecture as a reminder of their temporal origins and spiritual calling. Within those settings, the collegiate brand of this revival has persevered successfully and even thrived. It has been anything but a blind alley.

## 4. The Boston Bohemians

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Cram and his followers breathed new life into the Gothic Revival, giving it a stature it had not enjoyed since the Middle Ages. Although the eclectic architectural spirit of the time created a welcoming climate, public reawakening toward the style was largely owed to a single, modest book, *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres*, by Henry Adams.

### *Our Lady's Tumbler* in Boston Bohemia

Collegiate Gothic architecture was meant, among other things, to renew a tradition that had been brought prematurely to a full stop “by the synchronizing of the Classical Renaissance and the Protestant Reformation,” to quote Ralph Adams Cram. The objective of this polemicist for Gothicism in the United States became [to revive English Perpendicular Gothic](#) as it existed at the critical moment when King Henry VIII turned England from the Catholic Church. Cram’s architectural style established a touchstone (with the pun entirely intended) for all later expressions of Gothic on American campuses.

Against such a backdrop, the rediscovery of *Our Lady's Tumbler* and the ascendancy of its thoroughgoing recasting by Anatole France could have or even would have seemed to offer the literary stuff for a small-scale Gothic revival. The tale had fantastic and storybook elements that rendered it compatible with the earliest Gothick novels, in which monks up to no good skulk down into underground vaults. It too depended upon movements and actions inside ecclesiastical architecture. Yet the narrative had traits that brought it into the same orbit with the more redemptive, medieval-historical, and historicizing novels of Sir Walter Scott. This modernized form subtracted the special *k* from Gothick. In the French poem from the Middle Ages, a lay brother slipped down into a crypt dutifully, for only the best of purposes.

Both the medieval story and its modern French prose adaptation began to cause a tectonic shift in Boston in the 1890s. At this juncture, the city found itself in a fleeting

decade of exceptional fin-de-siècle vibrancy that followed what Cram termed “[this youth movement of the eighties](#).” The last ten years of the nineteenth century swung between two poles. One is well known—the legacy of Puritanism lingered a long while. Captured in the phrase “[banned in Boston](#),” prudery led, from the late nineteenth through the mid-twentieth centuries, to prohibitions against the distribution or display of risqué literature, plays, films, and songs. Bostonians had a reputation for priggishness. In fact, associating fleshpots with Beantown or bacchanals with Boston still seems oxymoronic. The metropolis has never been known for its pleasure palaces. Unlike Las Vegas, which vaunts the tag line “What happens here, stays here,” the New England municipality has not been known for facilitating seamy occurrences that would need to be kept hush-hush.

The other end of the spectrum from the killjoys received an oppositional push from “[Bostonian bohemianism](#)” or even Boston decadence. This countercultural faction steeped itself in what the nineteenth-century British essayist Walter Pater called “[the mood of the cloister](#).” In Britain, the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood flaunted its embrace of the mood within scenes depicted in paintings. In contrast, the Beantown bohemians played precocious precursors of Medieval Times™. Forming a Club Med(ieval) all their own, they gathered to primp and preen for exercises in masquerade, reenactment, and dress-up. Gothic revivals and medievalism relate to donning the past as well as to putting on different identities as disguises. Nor was that all. The Bostonians also elevated publishing in their nation to heights it had not previously known. They demonstrated that American-made books and periodicals had the capacity to take wing from being mere commercial products to becoming true craft objects.

To promulgate his ideals, or rather those he claimed were medieval, Cram collaborated as a young man with like-minded friends to publish the *[Knight Errant](#)*. Despite appearing in a mere four issues in its brief life from 1892 to 1893, the magazine has been recognized as “a crucial element in the revival of book-making in America.” At the time, the decorative arts, [including bookcraft](#), underwent the same sort of refinement in the United States and particularly in Boston as they had done already in England.

The periodical brought out by Cram’s mainly homosocial circle was avowedly under the shadow of English aesthetes, especially William Morris and exponents of the Arts and Crafts movement. The mission statement by the editors admitted freely that [they were not in the vanguard](#), at least not internationally. Like the *Knight Errant*, Morris’s Kelmscott Press exercised an influence out of all proportion to its own relatively [short existence](#). The effects resided partly in the quality of the fine books it produced in limited print runs, partly in the relationship that it posited between artists or artisans on the one hand and their craft and society on the other, and partly in the general attention to design that it inculcated. The very cover of the inaugural printing (see Fig. 4.1), conceived by [Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue](#), in time to become a much-esteemed partner in Cram’s architectural firm, betrayed the long and lovely stylistic

shadow of Morris. Another well-known intermediary for William Morris, particularly within the craft of bookmaking, was [Fred Holland Day](#), who also had a hand in the journal. Before the conclusion of the decade, he would copublish the first American edition of *Our Lady's Tumbler*.

In its quixotic and quick-dying fashion, the *Knight Errant* resembled the medieval revival with which it was associated, or even Cram's much later [The Gothic Quest](#). To be specific, it aimed to enter the scrum against realism, materialism, and mammonism. In this enterprise the architect's nearest confederates, "the Knights of the Gothic Quest," belonged to a minor and momentary movement which they called visionism. [The ranks of the visionists](#) extended far beyond Goodhue. Among these cronies, Cram developed the sclerotic paternalism he would espouse the rest of his life—even if the all-maleness of the fraternity has raised not only an eyebrow but also a question or two about what kind of daddy he would have grown up to be. Other [more casual associates](#) included various individuals who would have fearsome intellectual firepower in the future. All of them were likewise affiliated with Harvard.

## Charles Eliot Norton

In the 1850s, Charles Eliot Norton engaged closely with both [Ruskin](#) and the Pre-Raphaelites, and [corresponded with Dante Gabriel Rossetti](#). The Harvard professor received [gifts of actual medieval manuscripts](#) from Ruskin as well as from James Russell Lowell. Later, the art historian emerged from the Civil War with a strengthened conviction that the Middle Ages could constitute a model for the social and [moral regeneration of the US](#) as a nation. [Norton's turn to medievalism](#) rested on an assumption or wishful projection that medieval society had essentially democratic impulses. Like Morris before him, he viewed guilds from a half millennium before as [democracies in miniature](#). He further assumed that the protodemocratizers from five or so centuries earlier displayed those idealistic inclinations in the communal enterprise of erecting cathedrals. Owing to such presuppositions, [his study of medieval church-building](#) from 1880 is anything but ideologically anodyne. On the contrary, the book is loaded with lessons to be drawn by his countrymen.

Even before the Civil War, Norton must have intuited a likeness between the massive campaigns to construct great churches that studded the skyline of medieval Europe with spires and the frenetic urban expansion of the contemporary United States that would accelerate in the decades afterward. Furthermore, he detected in the [cathedral-raising culture](#) of the Middle Ages the same meritocratic openness to innovation by workers at all levels that has long formed part of America's self-image. The art historian also showed precociously the hunger for a holistic cohesion in both architecture and society that led many after him to different iterations of Gothic revival. In espousing the view that the style was inherently organic, he calls to mind his fellow American and New Englander, Ralph Waldo Emerson. The transcendentalist held that

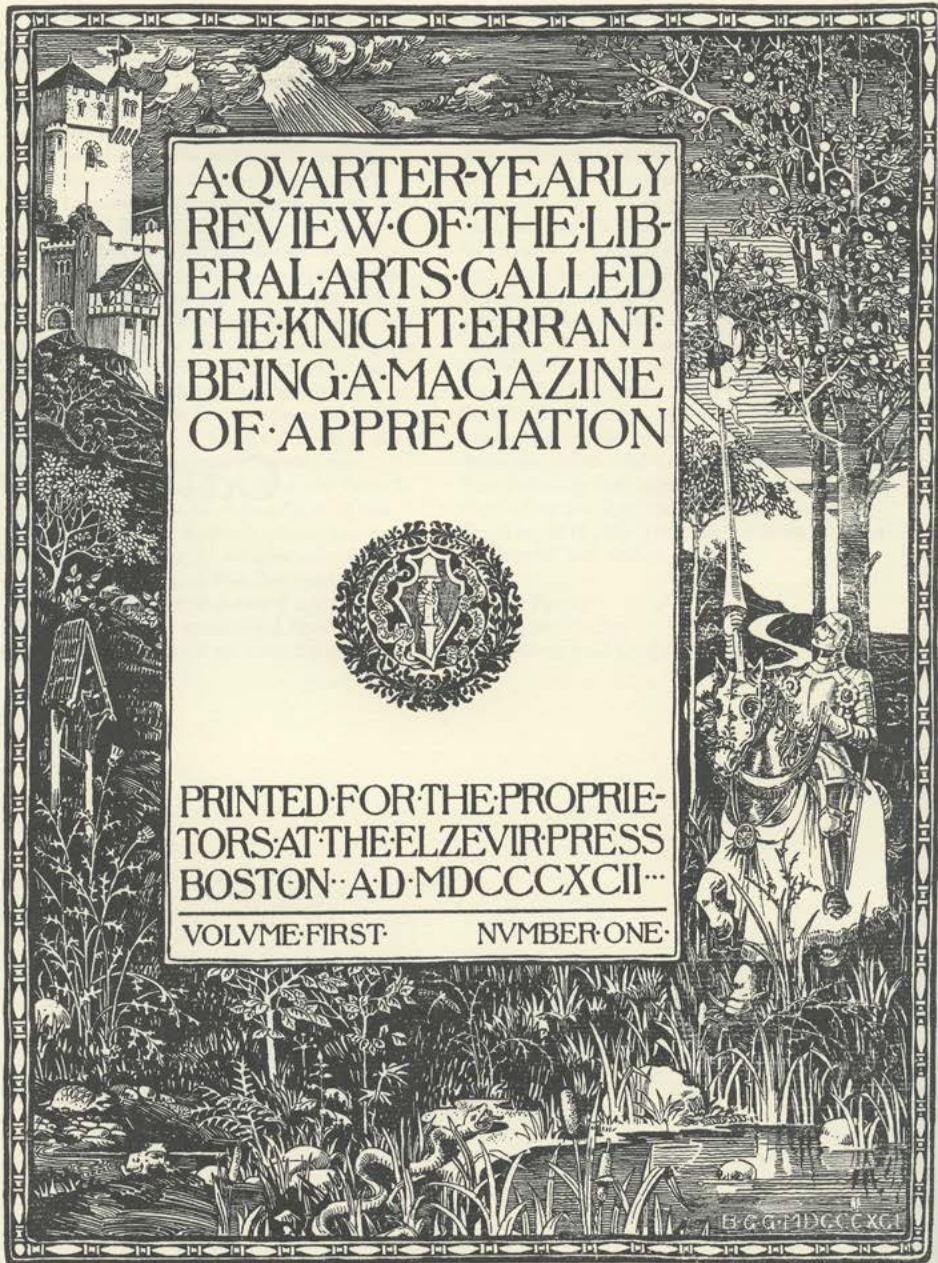
“the Gothic cathedral is a blossoming in stone subdued by the insatiable demand of harmony in man.” In Norton, the unitary wholeness of the architectural style came hand in hand with simplicity and sincerity, qualities valued as intensely by American revivalists as they had been by the French, from Gaston Paris through Anatole France and beyond.

In a spirit of spreading respect for the Middle Ages in its anticipation of the democratic aspirations of modern America, Norton played a prominent role in promoting medievalism among the young in Cambridge and Boston (see Fig. 4.2). In 1875 he was appointed the first professor of art history at Harvard. In 1881, he inaugurated the Dante Society. Membership was not restricted to academics: for instance, he persuaded Isabella Stewart Gardner to join. She went still further in her interests as an amateur Dantist by purchasing several manuscripts of the Italian poet’s works. Nor was Norton’s commitment to medieval culture restricted to scholarly theory as opposed to artistic and artisanal practice. In 1897, he became the first president of the Boston Society of the Arts and Crafts. Cram and Goodhue participated in its founding.

At first blush the art historian’s positive disposition toward the medieval period may seem to blend into Adams’s, but ultimately the outlook of the older man toward the Middle Ages looks to have been even more optimistic than that of the author who wrote *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres*. The professor of art history sought to renew the United States and to reform its society by aligning the modern day with the Middle Ages, much as the medieval era had been mediated in Britain by Ruskin and the Pre-Raphaelites. The United States confronted its own social and economic challenges, and for obvious reasons it would be misguided to assimilate it facilely to British Victorianism. Yet certain slices of intellectual society in both nations sought to wield Gothic architecture as a means of solving crises in social values. Norton supposed the cathedrals of a half millennium earlier to embody democracy, but of a kind imbued with morality and virtue that were not evident in the politics and government of his own day.

Even the mere feat of uprooting Gothic architecture and replanting it in the modernity of both Great Britain and America was titanic. The transplantation constrained the medievalizers, in this case really the antimodernizers, to make what was intrinsically Catholic into something meet and right for primarily other Christian contexts. To achieve such legerdemain was no small feat. In Protestant environments, any magic touching upon Christianity incurred the risk of being considered mummery and mumbo jumbo.





1. Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue, Cover for *The Knight Errant*. 1892.

Fig. 4.1 Front cover of *The Knight Errant* 1.1 (Boston: The Elzevir Press, 1892).  
Illustration by Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue, 1892.



Fig. 4.2 Charles Eliot Norton, age 75. Photograph by James E. Purdy, 1903.  
Cambridge, MA, Harvard University, Houghton Library.

### *The Knight Errant* and Copeland & Day

To err on the side of underemphasis, the Middle Ages have been appropriated to many ends. One extreme is directed toward patriotism and the purposefulness of crusades. *The Knight Errant*, “[the crowning achievement of bohemia](#),” belongs deliberately to the other terminus of the spectrum, which is largely apolitical, un-nationalist, and individualistic. The journal purveys fine art printing in the spirit of William Morris. Not unrelatedly, it medievalizes in [imitation of manuscripts from the Middle Ages](#). At the same time it glamorizes, not too dogmatically, a short-lived decadence of mind-altering drugs and other experimentation. [On the cover](#) of the inaugural issue, an armored equestrian rides solitary through a thick forest [toward a lofty castle](#). The image is supported by the [programmatically statement](#) that leads off the periodical. There too the editors struck a pose as “men against an epoch.” They were quixotically chivalrous, on a quest in an America they regarded as a cultural wasteland. A few fellows from within their closed ranks would become architects, stippling the landscape of the United States with neo-Gothic constructions like so many castles, cloisters, and cathedrals. The poet Louise Imogen Guiney, another intimate within the coterie that produced the review, contributed to its first installment a poem devoted to the title character (see Fig. 4.3). She characterized this romantic horseman in a letter as being “[as mediaeval as possible](#), by way of representing the rebound from progress and science and agnosticism and general modernity.”



Fig. 4.3 Louise Imogen Guiney. Photograph, 1887. Photographer unknown. Published in E. M. Tenison, *Louise Imogen Guiney: Her Life and Works, 1861–1920* (London: Macmillan, 1923), frontispiece.

The knight errant had been in vogue so long that he had become a cardboard cut-out, ripe for parody. Only a few years later, a comic short story entitled “[Modern Knight Errantry](#)” was published in a British illustrated monthly. The tale revolves around two male suitors. They set out to engineer seeming crises in which they can satisfy their beloved’s yearning for them “to prove that chivalry is not quite dead” as a remedy against the “[most degenerate days](#)” in which they were living. These fabricated emergencies culminate in a boating accident in which the soggy swains come to blows with each other while floundering in the water. While they display anything but gentlemanly conduct, an old boatman is left to bring their soaked sweetheart ashore. Thus, the two wooers end up alienating the young lady they hope to win over. As has been the case since the Middle Ages, [the line between a knight errant and an arrant knave](#) is very fine.

The circle in Boston clung to the romantic image, perhaps not unlike the nearly life-sized painting entitled *The Knight Errant* that first went on display at the Royal Academy in 1870 (see Fig. 4.4). The creator, Sir John Everett Millais, explained: “The order of Knights errant was instituted to protect widows and orphans, and to succor maidens in distress.” In this case the alleged chivalric class furnishes a pretext to paint a young woman undraped—not so much distressed as undressed. Painters of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries who applied their brushes to compositions set in the Middle Ages often seized upon the otherness of the era as a ruse to reach this objective, much as other artists took advantage of the license allowed by primitivism and orientalism to portray the female natives of distant lands topless. The scene inverts the one in *Our Lady’s Tumbler*. In the medieval French poem, a scantily clothed man is comforted by a woman as heavily, although not as metallically, dressed as the armored warrior and wanderer in Millais’s canvas.



Fig. 4.4 John Everett Millais, *The Knight Errant*, 1870. Oil on canvas, 184.1 × 135.3 cm. London, Tate Britain. Image courtesy of Tate Britain, London. All rights reserved.

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In 1893 Herbert Copeland co-founded the publishing firm of Copeland & Day, which advanced inestimably the cause of fine printed books in the United States. His associate in the start-up was Fred Holland Day, another crony of Cram's. The two business partners took as their device the [flower and sharp-pointed rose parts](#) that illustrated a Latin motto meaning "Just as a lily among thorns." The accompanying design was a composite craftily formed from elements of marks from two sixteenth-century printers, who happened to be named Robert Copland and Richard Day. The image conveyed the challenges of achieving beauty and culture in an unreceptive and even [antagonistic environment](#). Apparently, Boston was a veritable briar patch.

The firm offers a very early example of a small press and independent imprint in the American publishing market. Although commercial, it was dedicated to fine printing, in emulation of William Morris's Kelmscott and [other private presses in England](#). Morris's politics, which tended toward social utopianism, could not have stood further from those of Cram, who nonetheless admired and even idolized the Englishman. Day had [met Morris](#) in 1890 and had even brokered an arrangement, plaintively unrealized, to copublish with Kelmscott. In content, the publishers were remarkable for the tight links they forged with [The Yellow Book](#) and with the still more



notorious Irish writer Oscar Wilde, himself a follower of Morris and mainstay of the scandalously avant-garde periodical.

The years of Copeland & Day coincided with the zenith—or nadir?—of a specific cultural moment. An 1893 article by the British man of letters Arthur Symonds referred to “[The Decadent Movement in Literature](#).” This loose faction suffused both the Victorian fin de siècle in England and its equivalent in the United States. Even a personage as reputable, rich, and well connected as Henry Adams [put on sportive airs](#) as a member of this club. Copeland & Day made their ties to the faction overt in 1893 by printing as their first book a novel by the thirty-year-old Cram. A production for connoisseurs in the inner circle, it bears the title *The Decadent* (see Fig. 4.5). Like various others associated with Gothic revivals, the budding architect proved himself ambidextrous: he swanked about, showing off his talents in belles lettres as well as in architecture. Here he plays at hedonism and dissipation. The scene portrayed in the frontispiece is not clearly either Hellenizing or orientalizing. Yet it is anything but typically Bostonian. It depicts two contemplatively doped-up young men attended to by a vaguely geisha-like young woman. Along with the sinuous folds of fabric that enwrap them, coiling tubes and fumes of hookahs channel opium to them. Anyone looking for a lancet window into Cram’s soul will have a letdown, but this novel and its context do shed some stained-glass light.

Being associated with Wilde himself and decadence may have helped keep the firm of Copeland & Day afloat in its first couple of years. The Irish author scored a phenomenal success in his 1882 [tour of the United States](#), and memories of that triumph lingered long. At the same time, being hitched closely to a controversial figure held the potential for creating unpredicted and unwanted nuisances. Initially, the Irishman’s trip through life took him down a primrose path. At first, he was highly publicized, the talk of the town wherever he went. Sure, he elicited a gale of lashing criticism for being a popinjay and poseur, proud as a peacock, but far worse lay in store. All too soon the notoriety curdled. Eventually the clamor over his two trials in 1895, conviction, and two-year prison sentence for sodomy may have contributed equally to the implosion of the movement. A backlash of social conservatism ensued.

In the late 1890s, F. Holland Day was seeking out youths of color, especially immigrants and African Americans, and taking their pictures. Sometimes he posed them in exotic attire, but often he had them wearing little clothing at all. Among the youths was a soulful, dark-skinned, Lebanese immigrant named Kahlil Gibran. The photographer made a friend of (or was the relationship more than just that?) the future writer and artist in 1896 when the boy was all of thirteen years old (see Fig. 4.6). Day’s attraction to decadence may have differed greatly from Cram’s. When viewed in hindsight, the future collegiate Gothickist gives the impression of having struck an attitude to which he had no intention of holding fast for very long. In contrast, Day looks firmly [*sic*] homoerotic and pederastic.





Fig. 4.5 Decadence on display: reclining men smoke hookah as they are attended by a female servant. Drawing, 1893. Woodcut by John Sample, Jr., after a design by Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue. Published in Ralph Adams Cram, *The Decadent: Being the Gospel of Inaction: Wherein are Set Forth in Romance Form Certain Reflections Touching the Curious Characteristics of these Ultimate Years, and the Divers Causes Thereof* (Boston: Privately issued for the author by Copeland & Day, 1893), frontispiece.



Fig. 4.6 Kahlil Gibran, age 16. Photograph by Fred Holland Day, ca. 1898. Washington, DC, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

The books of Copeland & Day [revolted](#) against the shoddiness and commercialism of the publishing industry in America of the time. In six years of existence, the house brought out not quite [one hundred volumes](#). In 1898, the heyday of the [Arts and Crafts movement in Boston](#), the press published the first edition of *Our Lady's Tumbler*, as

translated into English by Isabel Butler. This printing (see Fig. 4.7) followed the model of their earlier *This Is of Aucassin and Nicolette: A Song-Tale of True Lovers* (see Fig. 4.8). Metaphorically, both books took a leaf or more out of the [smaller Kelmscott printed works](#). Many reasons could be supposed for the appeal of the minstrel's tale to Day; an unusual one is that his most cherished piece by one of his favorite authors was Maurice Maeterlinck's *The Treasure of the Humble*, which opens with a chapter that investigates and glorifies silence.

The publishing house slammed shut its doors in 1899, when the two principals had a parting of the ways. Their venture had existed only slightly more than a half decade and failed to post a single profitable year, but it had stamped a mark of its own on America thanks to its amalgam of craftsmanship in form and charm in literary content. The *New York Times* bemoaned the demise of the business concern with an anonymous article entitled "[Books Beautiful, but Not Dear](#)." Perhaps the beautification could have gone on longer had the cover prices been higher.

Despite the shutdown of Copeland & Day, Butler's translation of the medieval poem had three subsequent editions printed in the Boston area. These reprints were produced by Small, Maynard & Co. The partnership had been founded in 1897. Herbert Small had been Copeland's freshman-year roommate, although he did not graduate in the end: dropping out of college to go into business is nothing new. Another active visionist, he scooped up the [unsold Copeland & Day stock](#) when the firm was shuttered. The lamplight of Boston medievalizing was not quenched totally or eternally, but a moment of special vibrancy had passed: both decadence and a decade ended. Few, if any, of the camp followers in Boston turned out to be lifelong lotus-eaters. In fact, many of them went on to make further contributions to the rooting of medievalism in American culture in the twentieth century.

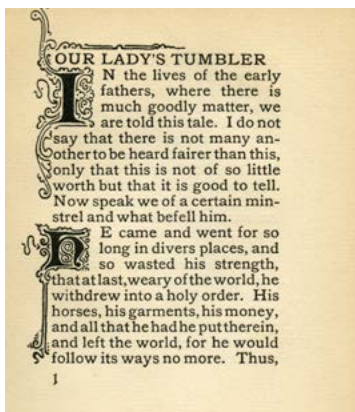


Fig. 4.7 Isabel Butler, trans., *Our Lady's Tumbler: A Tale of Mediaeval France* (Boston: Copeland & Day, 1898), <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/006003843>, 1.

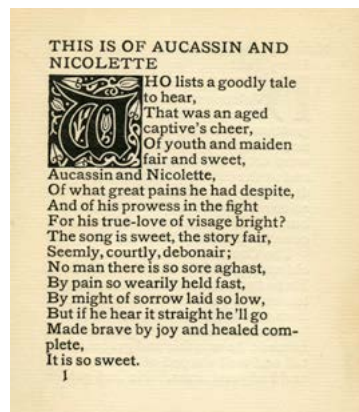


Fig. 4.8 M. S. Henry and Edward W. Thomson, trans. *This Is of Aucassin and Nicolette: A Song-Tale of True Lovers* (Boston: Copeland & Day, 1896), <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/100249107>, 1.

## Fred Holland Day

The year of 1898 was a key time for Fred Holland Day, the privileged only child of a wealthy couple, as he redeployed his energies ever more from publication into photography. In the same months in which his press brought out *Our Lady's Tumbler*, he kicked up a storm by teaming with a band of his friends to reenact for the camera *tableaux vivants* of Christ's life, death, and resurrection (see Fig. 4.9). The reenactments staged by Day can be set within the context of a decade-long vogue of filming the Passion, which in most cases entailed *representation of the Virgin Mary* among those present for moments of the Crucifixion and its aftermath. Both still photography and silent movies frequently formed battlegrounds for contention between laymen and clerics. Whether the salience of religious topics *protected filmmakers* from controversy or fanned it instead may be unascertainable.



Fig. 4.9 Reenactment of the Crucifixion. Photograph by Fred Holland Day, 1898. Washington, DC, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, the Louise Imogen Guiney Collection.

Day's omnivorous fascination with religion at this stage in his life led him to assemble a raft of material that included Roman Catholic ritual and art objects. He took especial interest in figural representations such as icons, artworks that used a supposed likeness to make a sacred figure present before the observer. In turn, the complexity of the relationship between image and what was imaged or imagined fit with his engrossment

in the interplay between photographs and their viewers. Prominent in Day's holdings of religious paraphernalia was a wooden Madonna that he [twice lent to exhibitions](#). As we have seen, the Virgin had been the object of attention for Ralph Adams Cram, who had contributed "[Two Sonnets for Pictures of Our Lady](#)" to the *Knight Errant*. With his parents, Day funded and oversaw the construction of the [Gothic Chapel of Saint Gabriel the Archangel](#) that stands at Highland Cemetery in Norwood, Massachusetts (see Fig. 4.10). The firm of [Cram, Goodhue and Ferguson](#) designed the little church in 1903. The completed building was dedicated not long after. Through his involvement in the propagation and appropriation of the Middle Ages in both literature (as a publisher) and architecture (as a patron), Day embodied the especially close acquaintance between these two arts that has often marked Gothic revivals.

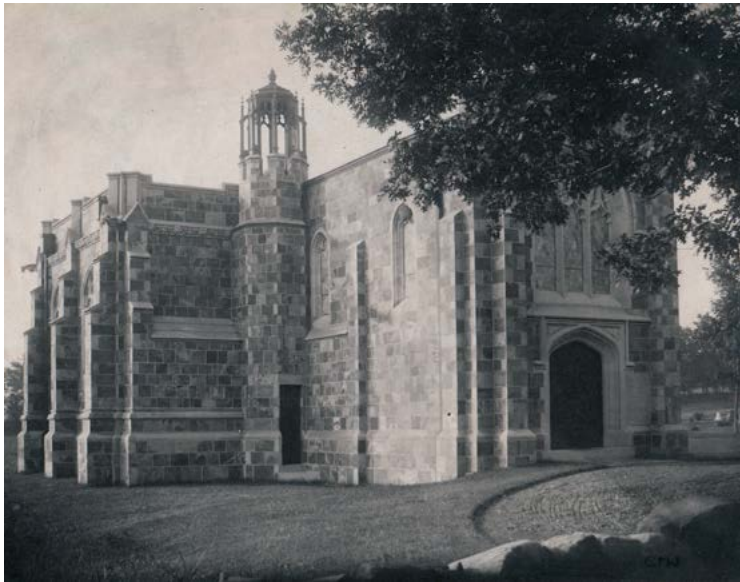


Fig. 4.10 Chapel of Saint Gabriel, Norwood, MA. Photograph by Clarence H. White, 1905. F. Holland Day Collection. Image courtesy of the Norwood Historical Society, Norwood, MA. All rights reserved.

Along with many others from America and Britain, Day made a cultural pilgrimage to Germany in 1890. The highlight of the expedition was the once-in-a-decade reenactment of the [Passion play at Oberammergau](#). The performances there did not begin until 1634, and the medieval text had been rewritten completely by 1670. Even so, the recurrent event has been treated popularly as a theatrical tradition that leads in an unsevered continuum from the Middle Ages. The impact of the Oberammergau Passion play until World War I would be hard to overrate, and a strong sense of the events can be culled from the many postcards that survive across the decades (see Figs. 4.11, 4.12 and 4.13). Viewing the event helped plant the seed for Day's later scheme to stage photographs of key scenes in Christ's final days.





Fig. 4.11 Postcard depicting the Oberammergau Passion play (date unknown).



Fig. 4.12 Postcard depicting the Oberammergau Passion play (date unknown).





Fig. 4.13 Postcard depicting the Oberammergau Passion play (date unknown).

As a counterpoint to the enthusiasm of Day and other young pilgrims, we have the supercilious skewering of such mass appeal by Henry Adams. In a letter in which he presents himself as a teacher of teachers, Adams explicates his steadfast ambition not to achieve a broad audience. He quails at the notion of cultivating a popular following of his own, equating such a hypothetical cheering section to “a crowd of summer-tourists, vulgarising every thought known to artists. In fact, it is the Ober-Ammergau Passion-play as now run for Cook’s tourists.” Three decades later, the travel agency of the Englishman Thomas Cook was still hosting tours to Oberammergau (see Fig. 4.14).

Day breathed in his passion for the Middle Ages with the air that enveloped him in his youth. His preparatory school had been Chauncy Hall, which at his matriculation in 1880 occupied a massive, new Gothic revival building in the Back Bay neighborhood of Boston (see Fig. 4.15). The structure was designed with state-of-the-art features, especially to be fire-resistant and thus to avoid the fate of its predecessor, which had

burned down in 1873. Gothic revival undeniably and consciously looked back many hundreds of years in some of its architectural features, but in other ways its American expression was made to be as modern as could be. The Middle Ages and progress were not set in opposition to each other. At Chauncy Hall, Day wrote “short treatises” on such topics as Martyrs and Martyrdom, Heraldry, and Insignia of the Order of the Garter. From a twenty-first-century vantage point, his education looks startlingly similar to Anatole France’s, but, of course, late nineteenth-century Beantown differed from earlier nineteenth-century Paris patently in many particulars.

From childhood, Day was fascinated by *exotic apparel and fancy dress*. In keeping with his romantic engrossment in the past, we have images from 1893 of him with his friends, assembled within the ampleness of the family mansion in Norwood, with its heavy and dark woodwork in Tudor Gothic style (see Fig. 4.16). The group has gathered for a pre-party before a festival of the Boston Art Students’ Association, with an organizing committee that counted Ralph Adams Cram, and are clad in clothing that was *meant to hark back to the late Middle Ages* (see Fig. 4.17). A photograph of Louise Imogen Guiney, Boston *bohème*, decked out as Saint Barbara complete with halo, likely survives from this very event or at least one like it (see Fig. 4.18). Day, Cram, and their cronies had the identical *zest for remote earlier times*, including ascetics and monks of late antiquity and the Middle Ages, that Anatole France, Félix Brun, and others displayed in the same fin de siècle.



Fig. 4.14 Tourist advertisement for the Oberammergau Passion play, 1934. Published in *Germany for the Tourist: Cook's Handbook 1934* (London: Thomas Cook & Son, 1934), 23.



Fig. 4.15 Chauncy Hall School, Boston, Massachusetts. Etching, 1878.  
Published in *King's Handbook of Boston, Profusely Illustrated*, ed. Moses King, 7th ed.  
(Cambridge, MA: Moses King Publisher, 1878), 157.



Fig. 4.16 Fred Holland Day's family mansion in Norwood, MA. Photograph by Clarence H. White,  
1905. F. Holland Day Collection. Image courtesy of Norwood Historical Society, Norwood, MA.  
All rights reserved.



Fig. 4.17 Fred Holland Day and friends in medieval costume. Photograph, 1893. Photographer unknown. F. Holland Day Collection. Image courtesy of Norwood Historical Society, Norwood, MA. All rights reserved.



Fig. 4.18 Louise Imogen Guiney dressed as St. Barbara. Photograph by Fred Holland Day, 1893. Washington, DC, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, the Louise Imogen Guiney Collection.

From this same period emit the results of a great photo opportunity. One captures Day, posed formally in late medieval garb, before he held court with his fellow publisher Copeland over a costume party (see Fig. 4.19). That is meant literally: in newspaper accounts, the chivalric group they formed was described as “King René’s court.” The name refers to “Good King René” of Anjou, author of two richly illuminated allegorical works in the mixed form of prose and verse. The inspiration is likely to have been a reproduction of a miniature from the so-called Breviary of King René. Thus, their festivities reenacted, not quite in tableau vivant fashion, a [manuscript painting](#) (see Fig. 4.20). The notion was not revolutionary. In fact, the good king had been the object of fancy and fantasy among medievalizers at the latest since William Morris, whose King René’s Honeymoon series of 1862 encompassed both stained glass and cabinetry.

The participation of Ralph Adams Cram as a youth in the medievalism of play-acting left an imperishable imprint on him. Decades later, when promoting the [Medieval Academy of America](#) after its foundation in 1925, he advocated for the adoption of rituals and regalia that would conjure up the Middle Ages he adored—his Middle Ages. A photograph of him from about this time shows him at the door of the Gothic chapel he had built on his own estate in Sudbury, Massachusetts, as his own personal place of prayer and medievalness (see Fig. 4.21).

The designer’s most extreme and extravagant move to reinstitute the Middle Ages in his own times came when he was appointed to a blue-ribbon panel that was to advise the city of Boston on its urban planning. Acting like a czar of architecture, Cram argued fruitlessly for constructing a neo-Gothic atoll in the Charles River Basin. The idea would be to create a kind of Bostonian equivalent to the Île de la Cité, the island in Paris on which the cathedral of Notre-Dame is located. He envisaged having on this manmade [Saint Botolph’s Island](#) a city hall, a great church (to be called by the same name given to the island as a whole), and an [open-air theater](#) (see Fig. 4.22). After his initial promotion of this caprice fell flat, he rejiggered it in favor of an isle for MIT to be called (this is not a joke) Tech Island. The notion, for all its seeming arbitrariness, is at once startlingly modern and surreally anachronistic. At the time, the United States was still perceived as the shining city on a hill. In a weird way, Cram tried to move the hill to an islet.

To return to the turn of the century, it would be intriguing to know if Day chanced to discuss religion, the Middle Ages, or even medieval miracles during his conversations with Maurice Maeterlinck. Not incidentally, [he collected the Belgian playwright’s works](#) and photographed him in 1901. Day’s friend Richard Hovey, an American poet and [passionate medievalizer](#), [translated some of Maeterlinck’s plays](#) into English (see Fig. 4.23).

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were a time of hunger for integrative visions—for holism. In this sense, [Cram had much in common](#) with Frank Lloyd Wright, even though in the search for organic order the Gothicism turned in a very different direction from the modernist. In view of the dynamics between the tumbler and his art, the tumbler and Mary, the tumbler and the monastic order,



and, last but not least, the tumbler and the Gothic church, it looks in hindsight to have been predetermined that those who belonged to Cram's clique would have been impassioned by the medieval performer. Like Henry Adams before and G. K. Chesterton after, some of these men were in their quirky ways monastic entertainers *après la lettre*.

In a letter from 1898, the poet Louise Imogen Guiney backed Day as he teetered on the brink of breaking with Copeland. When the two publishers parted ways in the following year and liquidated their partnership, Guiney wrote to Day to sympathize with him. In a very revealing turn of phrase, she expressed herself with all the intimacy that their close friendship enabled: "You've got to live your own life, after all, even if you wind up as sacristan of a Benedictine Abbey." What made Guiney imagine Day in a monastic role? Her motivation could have been nothing more than his well-documented engrossment in both Christian religion and medieval reenactment. Then again, she could have sensed other less spiritual proclivities in his attraction to all-male environments and to the male body. His poet friend makes no explicit observation on this other score, but some of Day's pictures are worth a thousand words.



Fig. 4.19 Fred Holland Day in medieval costume. Photograph by Fred Holland Day, 1893. Washington, DC, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, the Louise Imogen Guiney Collection.



Fig. 4.20 King René and his musical court. Miniature, fifteenth century. Reproduced on chromolithograph by Firmin-Didot Frères, Fils, et Cie, 1870. Image courtesy of Photo 12/UITG via Getty Images. All rights reserved.



Fig. 4.21 Ralph Adams Cram outside his Gothic chapel in Sudbury, MA. Photograph, 1925. Photographer unknown.



Fig. 4.22 "Plan No. 1, Island in the Charles River." Drawing, 1907. Artist unknown. Published in *Report Made to the Boston Society of Architects by Its Committee on Municipal Improvement* (Boston: Aldred Mudge & Son, 1907), fig. 36.

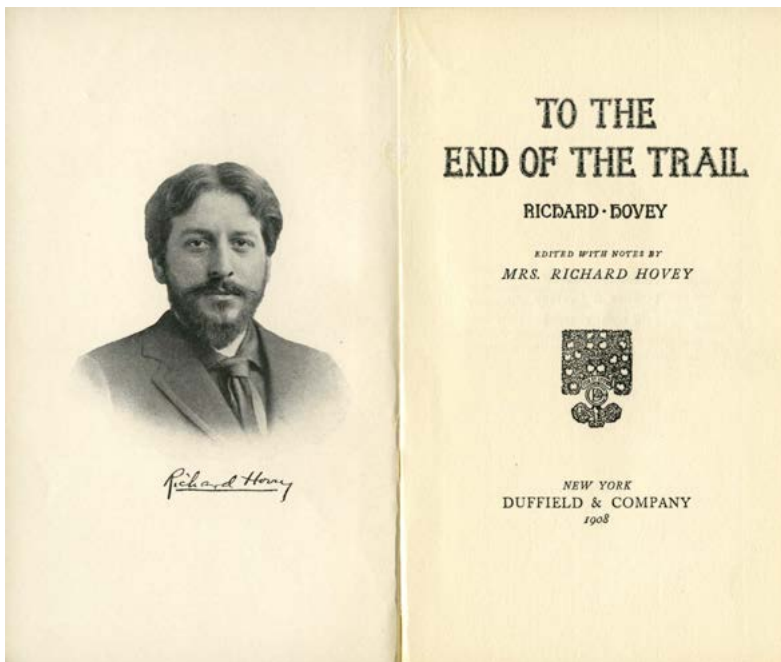


Fig. 4.23 Frontispiece, by unknown photographer, of Richard Hovey, *To the End of the Trail* (New York: Duffield & Company, 1908).

## Ralph Adams Cram, Great Goth Almighty

While Cram's model for art was the Gothic cathedral, his model for society was the monastery.

An admirer of Henry Adams, Ralph Adams Cram engineered (or architected) the first trade edition of *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres* as a reprint under the auspices of the American Institute of Architects. In his own account of his life, the Gothic designer and activist took pride in having orchestrated the arrangement for two main reasons. First, because of the book's excellence as "one of the most distinguished works of literature ever produced in the United States," and second, because of its value as "unique interpretation of the very heart and soul of the Middle Ages." He realized astutely that despite the fact that Adams did not come out in favor of medieval revivalism, the volume could still serve tacitly as a platform for the collegiate style.

The sentence that scores this pair of points is vintage Cram. It manages at once to be Anglophile and to strike an "America first" attitude. In it, he gives the lead to the United States, referring only afterward to the medieval period, and not even mentioning Europe. More than anyone else of his generation, this architect Americanized the Middle Ages and endeavored correspondingly to medievalize America. He believed that the American and medieval souls were closely akin. According to him, both were "liberating, innovative, and democratic." The indelibility of his inborn Americanism may be what recuses him from being dubbed the American Pugin.

In an "Editor's Note" to the reprint, Cram prescribed Adams's portrayal of *Chartres* as an antitoxin to grimmer aspects of then-present-day Britain and the United States. In discussion of time travel, many people may have heard the phrase "back to the future." The yearning to re-create remote and bygone times by progressing "forward to the past" is probably less run-of-the-mill. Even so, this expression would seem to describe the sort of motion that the architect, ever the fire-breathing polemicist, intended here to accomplish. He was just the man to do it, as a hard-liner who contrived simultaneously to be a headliner.

Much of the nineteenth-century turn to the Middle Ages had taken place after a rejection of Greece and Rome. No one stole from Gibbons the conception of decline and fall in reference to the Middle Ages, but the most factional of the medievalizers and medievalists definitely had a sense that Western Europe had lived through a steady deterioration from its earlier glory. Cram was by no means alone in his certainty that the Middle Ages could save people who had become estranged from beauty and nature. Ruskin had laid the groundwork for egalitarianism, and he had implied that the connector between Gothic and nature resembled that between humanity and nation. The American architect could quote his Ruskin chapter and verse, from having read the Englishman's books with voracity in his formative years. Louis Sullivan, a

founding father of skyscraper design in Chicago and elsewhere in the Midwest of the United States, likewise detected a [relationship between Gothic and nature](#). This realization inspired him in experiments that helped prepare the way for what would eventually become—drumroll, please—[skyscraper Gothic](#).

A more obvious link between Gothic and nature would be the close interaction between collegiate Gothic architecture and the scrupulous landscaping and gardening of Beatrix Farrand, the [Olmsted Brothers](#), and others. Although the names just mentioned pertain to the United States, the affinity has been found on both sides of the Atlantic. The emphasis on surrounding Gothic architecture with [carefully built landscape, especially gardens](#), originated long before Horace Walpole. At that stage, the designers had in mind properties (and property owners) that were imposing enough for commensurately grand gazebos and pavilions. Sometimes these edifices looked like crosses between castles and churches, with pinnacled turrets, crenellation, ogives, lancets, and quatrefoils (see Fig. 4.24). Through books, examples of such designs were broadcast rapidly across the ocean to North America.

In the nineteenth century, the nexus between Gothic architecture and landscape gardening was maintained and extended with greatest effect by William Morris. In 1874, the great man wrote to Louisa Baldwin, one of the [four extraordinary Macdonald sisters](#), asking her to “suppose people lived in little communities among gardens and green fields.” In the New World, fantasies of such utopias sustained a vision that would be actualized eventually in both campuses and suburbs. In sum, Gothic design and landscape gardening had a strong impact on each other from the very beginning of the revival. The renewal took root early in the landscapes of gardens, and Gothic has retained to this very day an abiding alliance and intimacy with the built landscape that may well exceed that of most other architectural styles.

In his autobiography, Cram plumed himself proudly that when his very first publication was printed, it was assigned the heading “[Have We a Ruskin among Us?](#)” This is not the place for appraising the degree to which the comparison between the two luminaries was warranted and apt. More consequential is what the American came to do with Gothic. Transposed into his own terms, the style would be suitable for both the National Cathedral and the house that forms the backdrop to Grant Wood’s *American Gothic*, dated 1930. Of course, the architect and his comrades had in mind to steer their navy of naves in a very different direction, by imposing the medieval manner of design as the standard idiom within the academy of higher learning.

In the United States, [Cram reigned without question](#) as the foremost exponent of collegiate Gothic. This architectural fashion is not at all identical with Gothic revivals of earlier sorts. On the contrary, it delivers energy, light and lightness, and, beyond all else, verticality—but it does so through the Americanized anachronism of stone, at a time when steel and glass held promise of attaining supremacy. Furthermore, it expresses within the context of universities many impulses that in the urban settings of the business world manifested themselves in Art Deco skyscrapers.



For more than thirty years, Cram could not be stopped. Like a rock himself, he could be neither blocked nor stonewalled. He was the powerhouse for the final iteration of the Gothic revival. Shaped by Ruskin, Morris, Rossetti, the other Pre-Raphaelites, and Wagner, he spearheaded a reprise in America of the style that had held sway in Britain through much of the nineteenth century. Nothing lasts forever. The replay in the United States ended, but it left marks that endure—and that differ from the traces still evident in the British Isles. In Cram's youth, much of his homeland had been at an undeveloped stage in the collection of European art and in the construction of buildings that ran the full gamut of European architectural modes. By his maturity, the situation had changed radically. In 1926, the architect and polemicist was featured on the cover of the weekly news magazine *Time* (see Fig. 4.25). For his staunch advocacy of Gothic as an architectural fashion for straight arrows, he has earned for himself the epithet of "[the American Goth](#)." Decades earlier, he had commented upon the [redemption of the word Gothic](#). Largely thanks to his own achievements, his wish had been fulfilled.

Cram was paramount in more than three decades during which Thomas Jefferson's notion of the university as an "academical village" (see Fig. 4.26) was recast radically to become what could be styled the "Gothical cloister." The college town is distinctive to the United States. In other nations, universities are situated mainly in major cities. In America, such institutions, largely under the influence of idealized images of Oxford and Cambridge, were often established at a distance from urban settings. Even when they were located in urban settings, they were walled off in quadrangles. Put together enough of the four-sided courts and the outcome would be in its own right what Woodrow Wilson of Princeton called "[a little town](#)." Such municipalities of professors and students suited well the associations with cloisters that prevailed by the end of the nineteenth century. Monasteries were seen as [generative hives](#) where monks engaged communally in performing sacramental work. What better role models could have been found for enabling higher education to fulfill the loftiness implied by its name? The medieval tumbler or juggler would have been very much at home.

How did the Gothicizing architect come to have a heart of stone, if we allow that its rockiness was only slightly cooler than magma? In his view, all of history in the *anno Domini* era demonstrated an inverse correlation between civilization and monasticism. In a line graph that would make a statistician today chortle, he set forth how the highs and lows of the one could be mapped readily against the peaks and valleys of the other (see Fig. 4.27). Then again, the true comedy may lie in ever exaggerating the utility of statistics in representing and analyzing human experience.

More than all the others who flocked toward collegiate Gothic, Cram promoted it—always trenchantly, sometimes misleadingly, but usually successfully. With him as bellwether, the style became a counterweight to modernism. Thanks in part to his accomplishments, many architects felt comfortable operating in and praising both modes. The perception of Gothic as antimodernist, and an antagonism between Gothicism and modernism, developed only relatively belatedly.

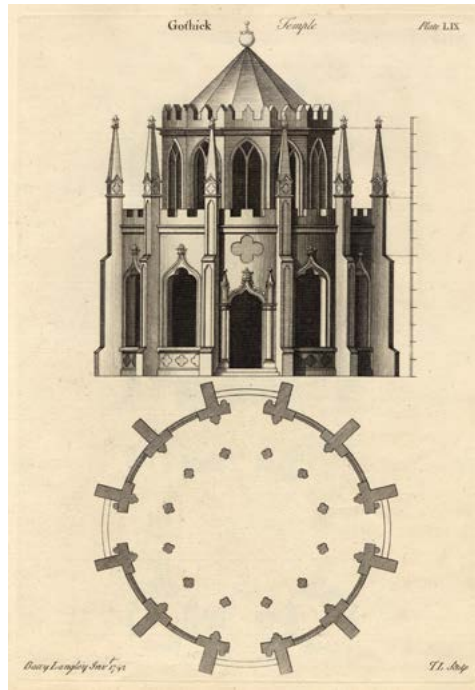


Fig. 4.24 "Gothic Temple." Drawing by Batty Langley, 1742. Published in Batty Langley, *Gothic Architecture* (London: Printed for John Millan, 1747), plate 59.



Fig. 4.25 Ralph Adams Cram. Drawing by Samuel Johnson Woolf, 1926. Published on the front cover of *Time* 8.24, December 13, 1926.



Fig. 4.26 “The Lawn,” part of Thomas Jefferson’s Academical Village, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA. Photograph by Karen Blaha, 2010. CC BY-SA 2.0.

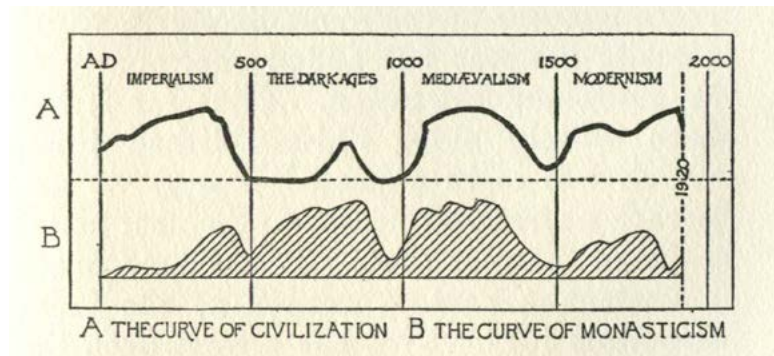


Fig. 4.27 Cram’s chart on the rise and fall of civilization and monasticism. Chart by Ralph Adams Cram, 1919. Published in Ralph Adams Cram, *Walled Towns* (Boston: Marshall Jones Company, 1919), <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/00159508033>

Then again, the argument could be made that the dichotomy between Gothic and modernism replayed a clash that had taken place at least once before. From this perspective, the head-butting of Gothicists and modernists transposed into the twentieth century an antinomy that had been elaborated one hundred years earlier. Wittingly or not, the nineteenth-century gusto for Gothic arose out of a tension with Hellenism that went back to early romanticism. The German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer contrasted Gothic as the negative pole of architecture with Greek. He went on to characterize the medieval style as “a mere appearance, a **fiction accredited by illusion**” and as “promising eternal security” that it failed to deliver in reality. The English thinker Samuel Taylor Coleridge, seeing the relationship between the two

fashions as [less antithetical](#), struck a more pro-Gothic stance. Greek and Gothic were sometimes regarded as having common elements, since both were outliers. Even Karl Marx enters the rumpus by juxtaposing “[Greek museums and Gothic steeples](#).”

In the United States, the Gothic revival constituted, in the growing basket of historicizing revivals, an alternative to the classical and especially Greek revival. An old creed held that medieval style is unforced and natural in contrast to the [ordered artificiality of ancient Greek architecture](#). Put differently, Gothic may be taken as instantiating regular irregularity. That is, the fashion permits a [compass for newness](#) that some felt was disallowed by the Greek revival. The medieval manner geometricized, but with an endless flexibility and modularity that the classicizing forms did not sanction. The polarity between Greek and Gothic is discussed self-consciously even as late as the supremely modern American architect [Frank Lloyd Wright](#).

In a similar spirit at the turn of the century, Cram posited Gothic in the architecture of his day to be something innovative. From his vantage point, it reared up against [other fashions that had played out](#). The revival (or, more accurately, reimagining) of various earlier historical periods and cultures allowed sometimes for different and even discordant elements to congeal. Yet such syncretism often took second place to bare-knuckle rivalry. In many cases, and Cram belongs among them, strong lines were drawn that determined the chronological and geographical boundaries of the style or styles deemed worthy of emulating. He sang the swan song for Gothicizing of the oppositional sort that held this fashion, in contrast to the other historicizing ones, to be not old and stale but new and fresh, and that exalted it over all other revivals.

In sum, the contrastive approach between Gothic and other manners manifested itself most obviously in—note the title—*Contrasts*, Augustus Pugin’s work from 1836. No less opinionatedly, the predisposition toward dichotomizing is equally present in the 1848 Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, which took an Italian painter as the primary constituent in its name. The brothers set up Raphael as the onset of a classicism that corrupted subsequent art. Cram takes this kind of stark division to new heights, from which the only way out was downward. Yes, Newton’s third law of motion instructs that what goes up must come down. But culture operates according to different principles—just as in haute couture hemlines go up, drop down, and ascend again. Ultimately, Gothicism belongs to a much larger systole and diastole that have marked Western culture since antiquity, when Atticism and Asianism were set at cross purposes. By these lights Gothic revival would be aligned with the latter, in contradistinction to the symmetry and economy of more classical styles.

The question of Gothic has great relevance in the earliest of all so-called modern times. The Renaissance framed itself self-consciously against the medieval. Its rejection of the Middle Ages sometimes took the form of smears that we should set in their historical context, but that we should be most gingerly about perpetuating today. We hardly do better to repeat unfounded slurs against earlier times than to make them in



our own day against different religions, races, national origins, creeds, sexes, sexual orientations, gender identities, and all other such categories. Prejudice is prejudice, even if the victims are long dead, and studious ignorance can be plied across time as well as space.

Deeper into modernity came the Enlightenment and classicism, which were countered in turn by romanticism. This last-mentioned movement set the stage for many forms of medieval historicizing, including both Gothic novels and Gothick architecture. The romantics initiated the nearly nonstop vogues of medievalism that permeated the nineteenth and much of the twentieth centuries. When juxtaposed with more modern styles, the Gothic and Renaissance revivals may seem to have more in common than not, but they were often viewed as competitors—and until the twentieth century, Gothic held the lead in the contest (see Fig. 4.28).



Fig. 4.28 Adolf Oberländer, *Gotiker und Renaissancier*, cartoon in *Fliegende Blätter* 1884. Reprinted in Walter Stengel, "Kunst und Künstler in der Karikatur: Ein Beitrag zur Psychologie des Laienurteils," *Kunst und Künstler* 15 (1917): 562–576, at 565.



Politically, collegiate Gothic did not repudiate and still less disregarded the image and ambition that the United States projected abroad as a new leader on the world stage. Becoming an ever more major player, the nation strode from the cocky confidence of the Columbia exposition of 1893 to the pushy imperialism of the Spanish-American War, the victory of World War I, and the economic growth of the 1920s. As this transformation took place, collegiate Gothic sought to endow the elite youth of America with an elegantly peaceful feedlot that intervened between the cozy pastures of childhood and the grueling racetrack of adulthood. With the breathing space given there, the cream of the crop could nurture their minds, bodies, and souls before entering service to their nation.

Although Cram was a survivalist, he was not one in the present-day mode, out to fill subterranean bunkers with ammo, tinned goods, dry-cell batteries, and all the rest. He believed that society stood in harm's way, but in his view its rescue depended upon returning to the best of the Middle Ages—the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. He helped to ready the ground not only for hundreds of churches, cathedrals, and college buildings across the continent, but also for the American public that embraced *Our Lady's Tumbler* in all its many guises in the first half of the twentieth century. The fate of the medieval French poem was tied to the strength of interest in the Middle Ages, as evidenced particularly in revivals.

The vision behind collegiate Gothic may be, and has been, presented as a flop. Even so, the style has endured. Its conscious unworldliness is unfairly caricatured if understood simply as mere mooning and escapism. College is figuratively a mother that stands in place of a parent. The Latin phrase *in loco parentis* has this literal meaning in English. The metaphor of motherhood underpins the equally Latinate image of *alma mater*, a bounteous mother. More circuitously, the entrance of students into a university is [matriculation](#). By metaphoric extension, the walled enclosure (and often the additional arcading) of a stone courtyard is an enclosing matrix, not from which to flee the world but in which to take form before entrance into it. All these terms derive from the word for “mother” in the learned language.

The quadrangle purveys cloistered seclusion and asceticism, but the separation from worldliness that it facilitates is not meant to be permanent. Rather, the college as so envisaged is directed toward preparation for active life within society. The institution is not designed to lead to sempiternal spurning of secular existence, as may have been the case with Christians of late antiquity or the early Middle Ages. Cram lacked a college education of his own, and indeed resisted the idea of formal education altogether. At the same time, he viewed architecture itself as inherently educative, although mainly in the service of religion, and the faith in question was a sacramental Christianity. He wrote, “[A true school of architecture](#) should be half college and half monastery, set in the midst of beautiful surroundings and beautiful in itself,” a creed both pluralist and inclusive, considering the times. The qualification in the closing clause is admittedly a major one—but do we have so much more on which to pride

ourselves today by way of contrast? After a conversion experience in Rome, Cram himself became a high-church Episcopalian. For much of his career he approached being a Catholic fellow-traveler. That affiliation raised no impediment to his designing buildings for the full range of Christian denominations, including Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Baptists, and even Swedenborgians. The ever-expanding universe of religions in the United States extends much further today, but for his period, this reach across confessions looks remarkable.

The adoption of the cloister played a central role in campus planning. The Gothic rectangle, especially as still observable at Oxford and Cambridge, became one of the chief articulations, or even the predominant module, of college architecture in the United States. It rebelled against large universities and their explosion in size. At the same time, it demonstrated alignment with the English collegiate tradition of close relationships, and of shared values developed from living in shared residences, between undergraduate students and their tutors or dons. Finally, it may also have given concrete (or actually stone) form to a pivot [away from a Teutonic model of higher education](#). Whereas the Germanizing universities in the United States emphasized the scholarly apprenticeship of advanced graduate students, the Anglicizing ones put the accent upon earlier-stage predecessors.

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The great American Goth designed buildings prolifically and persuaded by example all sorts of other architects to jump on his neo-Gothic bandwagon. His style for colleges and universities responded to specific trends in the architecture of the Middle Ages as he understood it. Cram's collegiate Gothic also embodied a reaction against many tendencies in the earlier Gothic revival in Britain and the United States. To take but one notable instance, his manner stands a world apart from the Ruskinian Gothic at the University of Pennsylvania, where [College Hall](#) was completed in 1873 on the West Philadelphia campus (see Fig. 4.29). Also in High Victorian Gothic style was the structure of buildings known as the [Long Walk](#) at Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut (see Fig. 4.30). Never one to swallow back his words, Cram had no commendatory pronouncement to make about Victorian Gothic. In fact, he railed against it. In his factoring, the decades from 1830 through the end of the century had seen abject failure, especially in [Carpenter Gothic](#). This [uniquely American idiom](#) was made imaginable through technological innovation. To be precise, this style was enabled by the invention of new devices such as steam-powered scroll saws. Such equipment accorded the builders unhindered freedom in the creation of sawn and carved wooden ornament—the fretwork and scrollwork that lend this form of Gothic its distinctive character. Not much better than Carpenter Gothic in Cram's view was the Ruskinian iteration, about which he was also [unmercifully bruising](#).

The firm of Cram, Goodhue & Ferguson won its earliest major commission in 1902 for the campus of the United States Military Academy, called most often simply West Point after its location on a headland above the Hudson River in New York. In an Americanization of romanticism, the valley of this great waterway gave rise in the mid-nineteenth century to the artistic movement in painting known as the [Hudson River School](#). Although its painters focused upon landscape and nature, the river vale elicited from architects their own heightened sensitivity to the picturesque, in Gothic villas. The Gothic revival of the Hudson is epitomized in domestic architecture by [Lyndhurst](#), a mansion overlooking the waters cutting through the lowlands in Tarrytown, New York (see Fig. 4.31). The [turreted villa](#) occupies the center of a park-like estate. The whole design embodies the painstaking interaction of architecture and landscape design that has been a hallmark of most Gothic revivals. Alexander Jackson Davis, who designed Lyndhurst in 1838, also exemplifies the close connection between Gothic literature and architecture at this stage in American culture. His architectural designs were [conditioned by his literary readings](#).

West Point Academy should not be viewed in isolation from Lyndhurst and other such domestic architecture. On the contrary, the Academy must be fitted within a framework of Gothic rivalry and emulation. The military college had itself already received a strong Gothic imprint during the superintendence of Major Richard Delafield, who had imposed what was considered a Tudor Gothic style on the library, barracks, and ordnance compound. [The library](#) contained towers with parapets and crenellation that typify this stage in the [castellated architecture](#) of West Point (see Fig. 4.32). In fashioning a special Gothic for the bastion, Cram seemed to aspire consciously to a fusion between castle and college. His amalgamation of the two is in one sense all medieval, in another all American. In creating this style, he had to toe a careful line. He wanted to repudiate the Gothic that preceded him there, but without [alienating those who had grown inured to it](#). The resultant Crammian compromise (if the architect's name may be uttered plausibly in one breath with a word for give-and-take) has been aptly termed military Gothic. West Point has been described as "a rustic, masculine, [militaristic Gothic campus](#)." The towers, walls, and revetments all exude muscularity and might.

The history of military Gothic merits further investigation, as does its connection with the concept of the college and university campus. The very noun, although Latin in origin and form, is American in its collegiate application. The [first attestation](#) refers to the grounds of Princeton University, in 1774. Eventually the term won out over the Anglo-Saxon "yard," which became fossilized at Harvard alone. As often applied, the designation takes the name of the landscape to denote the totality of buildings and other facilities upon it.



Fig. 4.29 Postcard depicting College Hall, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA (New York: Souvenir Post Card Co., ca. 1905–1914).



Fig. 4.30 Postcard depicting Trinity College, Hartford, CT (New York: Arthur Livingston, early twentieth century).





Fig. 4.31 Postcard depicting Lyndhurst, the residence of Helen Gould Shepherd, Tarrytown, NY (early twentieth century).

The word pulls in two directions. Its general meaning is “field,” in a literal rather than figurative sense. In many ways, the outdoor heart of the Princeton campus is the Revolutionary War-era “Big Cannon.” [Since 1840](#), it has been buried muzzle-down in the center of the quadrangle behind Nassau Hall. Does *campus* in a collegiate sense relate in any way to the Roman Campus Martius, with its meaning of “Field of Mars,” and to other drilling grounds for soldiers named after it, most momentously the Champ de Mars in Paris, where a few of the famous Expositions were held?

As soon as the construction of West Point was completed, the buildings became a point of pride that was promoted to the public (see Fig. 4.33). The match of date and project is not irrelevant, since the role of the United States military and indeed the overall orientation of the nation as a force in the world changed in the aftermath of the Spanish-American War of 1898. American international expansionism and collegiate Gothic may not have been directly related as reciprocal causation: they did not aggravate each other in a vicious circle or even in a vicious ogive. Yet their coincidence deserves to be remarked upon. At the same time, pointing it out is not to damn collegiate Gothic as inherently imperialist.



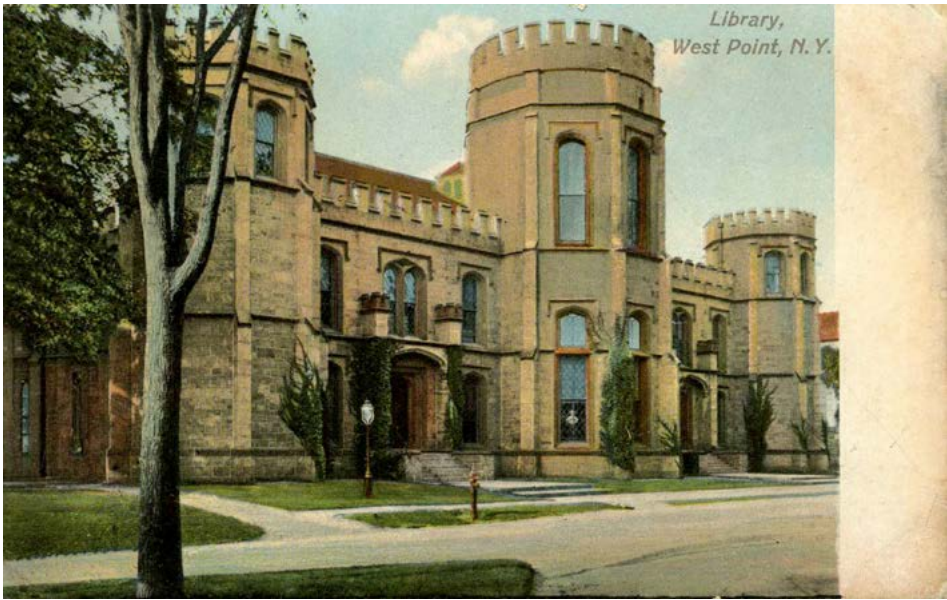


Fig. 4.32 Postcard depicting West Point Library, West Point, NY  
(Newburgh, NY: J. Ruben, ca. 1908).



Fig. 4.33 Postcard depicting West Academic Building, West Point, NY  
(West Point, NY: W. H. Stockbridge, ca. 1906).

## Americanized Middle Ages

A polemical denunciation of Adams's *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres* professes that it has value only as “an emblem of an artificial neo-romanticism in early-twentieth-century Boston culture.” Although no support is supplied for this acid-penned attack, justification could be gleaned from when the book finally made its belated entrance into the commercial market and the hands of potential buyers. Until 1913, it had been available only to those to whom it had been presented, or to anyone who could cadge a copy out of the author's personal cache from the two private printings.

In that later year, Adams became deeply invested in collaborating with a musician named Aileen Tone. In the twilight after the stroke he suffered in 1912, he threw his weight behind her in a project to reconstruct the songs of the Middle Ages and to re-create them in performance. To all intents and purposes, Tone (what a name for a person with her profession!) was an early music performer before her time. If the thought is not too outlandish, she could even be regarded in a retro way as an avant-gardist. In describing their musicological undertaking, Adams revealed his recognition that his book had served as a sort of bible for medievalizers—and that he had been made “a leader of a popular movement.” Now he prepared to rally his followers, by costuming Tone to act out *Aucassin et Nicolette* in the guise of its medieval romantic heroine. As luck would have it, this anonymous medieval French “song-tale” told a story with which *Our Lady's Tumbler* had often been associated.

*Mont Saint Michel and Chartres* presents itself not as a work of fiction, but as a study written by a professional historian (although perhaps on the balance sheet of many present-day medievalists not a professional medieval historian). Yet viewed historiographically, the volume is also surprisingly ahistorical and perhaps even antihistorical. Then again, maybe Henry Adams was word-perfect in denying it to be a book at all and describing it instead as a “conversation.” He called it a guide directed intentionally not to other certified members of his guild but to his harem of admiring and attentive young women, those so-called nieces of his, some blood relatives and others not.

When juxtaposed to his chief writings in history, this other title looks less like a conventional nonfiction than like an excerpt from an autobiography, a full-blown novel, or even an extended prose poem. This failure to be conventional would warrant vitriol, if the author had meant his pages to be historical; but he did not have that objective. Nor does the difference end there, with a disclaimer about what could be called positivism. In an even greater divergence, the blunt-speaking Adams gave the edge to his own times in the negotiation between past and present that any scrutiny of the Middle Ages presupposes. In one memorable description (not his own choice of words), he saw the medieval period as “the most foreign of worlds to the American soul.” In his years at Harvard, he had grappled as a medievalist professor with the otherness of the epoch. Accordingly, when nativizing the era for his compatriots, he

made, with full consciousness, his Middle Ages the Middle Ages of the twentieth century.

To go one step further, we could say that Adams constructed not just the twentieth-century Middle Ages in general but specifically the twentieth-century American Middle Ages. If those of us in the twenty-first-century expression of the nation think that we have left the preceding rendering behind, we deceive ourselves, hook, line, and sinker. In so doing, we also forfeit opportunities to learn from the past and enjoy a deepened self-understanding.

However laser-sharp the chiaroscuro may be in which the historiographic quirks and foibles of Adams's pages stand out nowadays, *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres* ranked as a high-status [bestseller in its own time](#). All its peculiarities notwithstanding, and maybe even because of them, the piece remained ensconced in American intellectual culture for decades thereafter. Published only a few years before construction of Washington's National Cathedral began in 1907 (that stone leviathan was completed only in 1990), the volume was as monumental a presence among books in the twentieth century as the Episcopalian cathedral has become among buildings in the nation's capital (see Fig. 4.34).

The main reason for the special place of Adams's meditation goes almost without saying. *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres* surveyed the Middle Ages from the vantage point of an American who sensed that European culture was in a downdraft or at least in disintegration. Countrymen of his have often reached the same verdict or succumbed to the same misapprehension, over the centuries, more often wrongly than rightly. Like others of his day, Adams found in the medieval past solace (tinged with escapism?) and a model for renewal. But the supposedly historical old times that he mediated to his countrymen were at once as true to the Middle Ages and as anachronistically fanciful, both intentionally and not so, as the collegiate Gothic edifices that Cram and others helped to erect on campuses across the land.

In the end Adams admitted that his view of the medieval epoch was too self-centered. Such appropriation of the period characterized the spell in which he lived. At all costs to both sides of the equation, Victorians and Edwardians, along with their American and French equivalents, often chose to connect the Middle Ages with their own age, and medieval lives with their own. When they could not find exactly what they wanted, they made it up. But did Adams twist long-ago centuries to achieve self-serving aims of this sort? Not necessarily—or not nearly so much as he made them serve his own personal needs. In this latter case, his self-absorption was the polysyllable omphaloskepsis, navel-gazing. Perhaps we owe ourselves the right to riff on it: the neologism of *omphaloskepticism* would well describe his distinctive self-awareness, which was marked by a decided self-doubt.

Overall, was Henry Adams's outlook on the Middle Ages as mistaken as some of his other political and social viewpoints? It has been concluded that his "*Mont Saint Michel and Chartres* is the culminating work of the medieval revival; it is also [the](#)

*bitterest proof of its failure.*" This take seems not to reflect the vantage of the writer under discussion, so much as that of the later critic. The author's wry nostalgia for unity lost in place of multiplicity gained marked him as a creature of his times. Being a nineteenth-century man may have branded him worthless in the twentieth, even as a product of the twentieth century may be so regarded in the twenty-first. Yet such acrid judgments may not be warranted. In either case, the person in question is not here now to wheel around on the backstabbers, straight-arm them, and defend himself in a fair fight.



Fig. 4.34 Washington National Cathedral, Washington, DC. Photograph by Wikimedia user NoClip, 2007, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Washington\\_National\\_Cathedral\\_Twilight.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Washington_National_Cathedral_Twilight.jpg)

Even if we accept the argument that Henry Adams led medievalism to a dead end in this book, the impasse he hit may indict the society that changed around him as much as it does his own lushly imbricated mind and psychology. Within the purview of the present study, more than enough that is good and germinal in medievalism, and the Middle Ages, may still linger on to justify our delving back into them and discovering how much we can bring forward to our own times. The medieval revivals, particularly Gothic, deserve inclusion, even as a primary color, on the chromatic spectrum of past architectural and ornamental styles.

The people responsible for collegiate Gothic covered a wide range. At one end can be pegged the administrators, who could in most cases be fairly called educational reformers. They opted for the architectural style, so long as they could defray the costs. In the middle stood the donors who funded the construction. Finally, and maybe above all, came the architects and builders who made into lapidary realities the aspirations

of the university presidents and the ambitions of the moneyed alumni. All three of these parties to the great Gothicization that was attempted in the United States made the manner in many regards more authentically American than other movements such as Beaux-Arts, Art Deco, or Bauhaus. The nation had had no “original” Middle Ages, but for more than a quarter century it made Gothic native American in a “new and improved” style that is not attested in identical form in Europe or for that matter anywhere else in the world.

The Americanization of collegiate Gothic rested upon a substrate of the authentic brands of Gothic found in both France, especially Normandy and the region known as Île-de-France, and England, especially Oxford and Cambridge. It owed something to the studies of architectonics by Viollet-le-Duc. But it remained largely independent of traces of the earlier Gothic revival in the Ruskinian and Victorian molds. The diffusion of both public and private institutions of post-secondary education is one of the most remarkable achievements in the rise of the United States of America. Perhaps this pronouncement states the case backward, since rather than a result of what has been designated the American century, the proliferation of higher learning could equally well be considered a cause. The colleges and universities spread in tandem with various medieval revivals. The most impressive among those, collegiate Gothic, was central in the American Middle Ages and in its conception of advanced education. Its centrality abides.





## 5. The Rise of Collegiate Gothic

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### American Gothic Colleges: Ogive Talking

Not only are universities a “cathedral”  
for worship of knowledge, they are also  
“sheltered workshops” for the socially  
challenged.

—Tony Attwood, expert on  
Asperger syndrome

Collegiate Gothic marked the last and, at least on the North American continent, the greatest of numerous architectural revivals. In most cases, what has happened in this manner of construction from its very origins until now has occurred in direct proportion and correlation to developments in literature. An association between Gothic literary styles and architectonics of the Middle Ages has been drawn repeatedly. For instance, Gaston Paris, the first prominent public promoter of *Our Lady's Tumbler*, compared the literature of the early thirteenth century with what preceded it by fixing the texts he scrutinized [in the context of the architecture](#) that was contemporaneous with them. Of course, the conjunction of Gothic literature and architecture was by no means limited to the medieval period, which adds a measure of complexity to the application of the adjective Gothic. When modern authors, whether of fiction or of nonfiction, deploy the word, we must seek to discover exactly which period they mean to evoke. In architecture, the concept has encompassed at one extreme actual premodern construction techniques and masonry, and at the other the merest veneer of the medieval or the faintest gesture toward the Middle Ages, laid over modern engineering and materials.

Accordingly, no one should be astounded that at times in the twentieth century the jongleur was taken to heart nowhere more flashily—more flamboyantly, in all senses of the term—than in American universities. He elicited this open-armed welcome to no small degree because those settings had been made medievalsque in their buildings and built environments. For this reason, those who hugged him to their bosoms

wrapped their arms around one of their own. In effect, the early thirteenth-century entertainer was made an honorary undergraduate. A quick-change artist, he swapped his monastic costume for the graduate gown of a college senior at commencement. Likewise, many a student thought of himself as the tumbler. Both the medieval dancer and the modern collegian were abstracted from the thick of the world, freed to be the eye of the storm in their own unflustered frenzy of activity. Collegiate Gothic furnished places designed for losing track of time.

To fathom fully the reception of *Our Lady's Tumbler* and its clan in the United States, we must come to terms with the country's turn to collegiate Gothic during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Gothicization of architecture on campuses was felt to have cultural ramifications that transcended architecture and quarried stone alone. Both the armed forces and most private colleges in the United States were then single-sex institutions, several decades away from the comingling of women and men that is now the norm. Whether in soldiers' barracks or college dormitories, the young male elite of the country were quartered together. A platoon of persuasions guided the architectural trend toward Gothic in many American educational institutions. Among them was a belief that the types of national service—in the military, public affairs, and even private enterprise—for which the *crème de la crème* was being trained possessed a [spiritual underpinning](#).

In a sense, on-campus buildings required validation by being associated with the epoch in which the institutions they solidified were created. This sort of logic would have led inevitably to tapping the Middle Ages for enhancements to the architecture and landscape of universities. From the perspective of Europeans, this reflex toward Gothic could have seemed the response of *nouveaux riches* and *parvenus* who craved immediate gratification in the guise of an immediate faux past. (In the consumer goods of our own century, we now take similarly for granted prewashed jeans, distressed furniture, deliberately cracked ornamental glass, or any number of other pseudoantiques.) In this interpretation, the United States was raising colleges and universities for which alumni, administrators, professors, and students sought an artificial history. From their subjective point of view, mediaevalsque architecture could provide a counterweight to the unstable totteriness of newness. By being imitative, collegiate Gothic—one of the most distinctive reflexes of the style in America—was by its very nature uninspired and unoriginal. Yet the question of its authenticity merits scrutiny. To be even more derivative, it could be said that originality is itself a relative construction.

Even Americans questioned the intellection that led ultrawealthy graduates to impose this pseudomedieval style of architecture upon colleges in the building campaigns of the early twentieth century. Take, for example, Henry Seidel Canby, who graduated from Yale University in 1899, taught there afterward, and eventually underwent the academic apotheosis of becoming an English professor with tenure (see

Fig. 5.1). Under the revealing title *Alma Mater: The Gothic Age of the American College*, he reeled off a raft of retrospection, at once anecdotal and sociological, on the experiences of his generation, and on the architectural and social ecosystems within which they took place. Canby described the metamorphosis of “the ugly college of the nineties” and “the bare and nondescript college of [his] youth” into “a new Oxford.” To fulfill “a romantic alumnus’s dream of a proper setting for college life,” the transformation was achieved “at frightful expense.” This alum loyalist chose “the florid Tudor Gothic” that, despite its cost, became the hallmark of the fin de siècle. For that reason, the astringent author of *Alma Mater* opted to call this whole dreamily idealistic phase of American education “Gothic.”

To Canby, the style was at once traditional, unorthodox, imitative, and sham. Despite the uncertain relevance of such features to America, this Gothic “spotted [the continent] with ramparts, cathedral towers (sometimes very beautiful), gargoyles, machicolations, and light-resistant windows.” Within this “imitation monastery” and these “imitation Middle Ages,” this consummate Yale man admitted that the social engineering driven by the architectonics worked: since attending college at the time was mostly a male (and white) prerogative, his classmates and he bonded like the brethren of medieval monastic orders or fraternal organizations. The choice of period to imitate resulted from mindful efforts by university administrations and architects. Once again, the disjunction was anachronism aforethought. Cram, the campus planner of Princeton and public face of collegiate Gothic, described the institution of higher learning as “a walled city against materialism and all its works.” The medievalism was to remedy the negativism of modernity. Gothic was inherently character-building.

Canby’s undergraduate years, the final ones of the nineteenth century, witnessed a conscious turning by advanced education in the United States to an Americanized usurpation and adaptation of the medieval period. This move had a simple logic: universities originated in the Middle Ages. Wring residue of those earlier centuries out of these societies, and you may even sap their legitimacy as the establishments they are. A case in point is the often farcically mediaevalesque academic garb that we take for granted at graduation ceremonies, with its extraordinarily long-lived sartorial standards.

A professor of architecture, writing in 1925, saw the choice of architectural styles on campuses as resulting willy-nilly from the expansion that had occurred within universities of the time. In his view, the colleges of America had undergone a growth in their calling. The evolution of academic mission had interacted, in a relationship that was equally causal, with the determination of trustees for the institutions to build or rebuild buildings and grounds according to a single architecture. Although this writer was open to a variety of styles, he focused primarily upon ones in collegiate Gothic. This point of convergence led him logically to identify in turn Monte Cassino as the flagship cloister of the Benedictines, Clairvaux as that of the Cistercians.



Fig. 5.1 Henry Seidel Canby at Yale University. Photograph, date and photographer unknown.  
New Haven, CT, Yale University, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.  
Image courtesy of Yale University, New Haven, CT.

The alignment of resurgent Gothic with the universities made sense. The lesson encoded in the historicism of the Federal period was, whether we agree or disagree nowadays, that organizations deserved the architecture of the culture that engenders them. In the initial stage, courthouses, capitol buildings for congresses, and other offices were built to recall the democracy associated with Greece, the republic (and empire?) evoked by Rome. If the executive, legislature, and judiciary merited the augustness of antiquity, then by the same token higher learning, an undeniably medieval legacy, was suited to the lofty erudition and spirituality of the Middle Ages.

Was the Gothic revival (or, once again, arrival) in the United States less genuine than its counterparts in Britain and Europe? In one sense, the answer would be an obvious affirmative. In another, such criticism would not have rung entirely true at the time. After all, even the Continent was submersed in altogether new constructions in German-influenced [round-arch](#) or neo-Romanesque and in new Gothic revival style. Furthermore, even veritable Gothic edifices had in some cases been so heavily restored that important features thought to be bona fide medieval were on the contrary far [later accretions](#). To round out our picture of the neomedieval presence within Europe, we should reflect upon what happened after the Great War. Owing to wartime damage, many buildings that had been through-and-through medieval, such as the principal church of Reims, required and underwent salvage and reconstruction. Sometimes the work was on a minor scale, but in other cases it qualifies as very extensive.

On American college campuses, already existing pseudomedieval edifices of neither Romanesque nor Victorian lineage were all suddenly scratched out in one mass die-off of entire architectures. Gothic from Queen Victoria's era survived at a lower rate, but plenty of specimens remain. Furthermore, adapted and enhanced flavors of [Romanesque revival](#) continued to be built even into the heyday of collegiate Gothic. Still, whether we



choose to call it Lombard or Norman Romanesque revival, and however prepossessing the sparse additional constructions in the style may have been, it marked the exception to the rule. In the early twentieth century, collegiate Gothic held sway.

Among the various colleges and universities where he was active (or hyperactive, to be more accurate), Ralph Adams Cram put his stamp most enduringly on Princeton. While house architect there from 1907 to 1929, he designed in a mainly Perpendicular Gothic style much [more than merely the vertebrae](#) of the campus. The recasting of the institution in collegiate Gothic had begun more than a decade before Cram's commission, with the construction in 1896 of [Blair Hall](#). Thus, Blair could not be chalked up to the later architect's towering ambition. The status of this dormitory as the university's "first building of collegiate Gothic architecture" was proclaimed in postcards. This hall gave a special twist to the idea that a man's home is his castle. It incastellated, like aspiring knights, the male undergraduates who resided there (see Figs. 5.2 and 5.3). Its pointed arches and battlements of gray stone and its bay windows with leaded panes became iconic features.



Fig. 5.2 Postcard depicting Blair Hall (from south), Princeton University, Princeton, NJ (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Store, ca. 1913).



Fig. 5.3 Postcard depicting Blair Hall (from north), Princeton University, Princeton, NJ (Philadelphia: Ruth Murray Miller, early twentieth century).

The dormitory occupied a cardinal position, almost like a checkpoint, near the rail depot at the end of [the spur](#) that connects Princeton to its junction with the main line (see Fig. 5.4). Since then, the terminus of the railroad has been repositioned again and again. On each occasion, it has been shifted ever farther from the hub of the campus. As a result, it now requires command of distant history to realize how things looked back in the days of F. Scott Fitzgerald. The novelist says nothing explicit of the railway in his debut novel *This Side of Paradise* from 1920, but the itinerary of the protagonist upon arriving at the university assumes its existence. In that once “upon a time,” the collegiate Gothic residence halls served to [screen the iron technology of the real world](#) from intruding upon the quintessentially American timelessness and placelessness of the sylvan Middle Ages in this New Jersey university. In this sense, the so-called Dinky station and the dormitories ringing it employed this architecture to familiarize and domesticate technology that would have otherwise been invasive. By the same token, the locomotive and its cars spat out visitors not just before a modern university but also before a [medieval fantasyland](#).

The commitment of the trustees to the new but not-so-new style must be set in a larger context of institutional change. In 1896, what had been formerly the College of New Jersey completed its official name change to Princeton University. In the same year, the institution celebrated its 150th anniversary. The transition from a college of undergraduates only to a university with graduate students as well was offset by the imposition of a uniform and unifying collegiate Gothic. Previously, the campus had been distinguished (or undistinguished) by its architectural eclecticism. By committing to one style, the newly conceived university could maintain the halcyon illusion of collective oneness, the [presumption of community](#), that its first element of *uni-* implied: “We are one, we are in this together.”

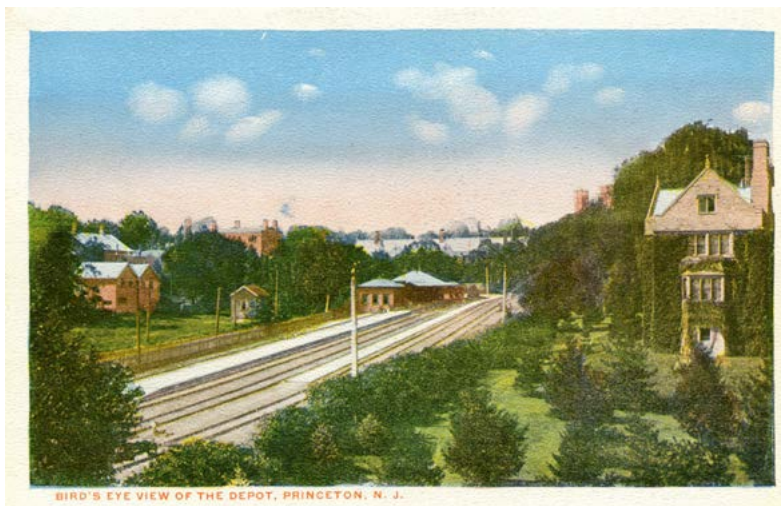


Fig. 5.4 Postcard depicting the train depot of Princeton, NJ (early twentieth century).

Intellectually, the American university of the early twentieth century could accept to an extent the Germanization of education. Specialized graduate training, the seminar system, and a scholarly orientation had become consolidated within the more ambitious establishments of higher learning, now conceived of as research institutions. Those who shaped the expanded institutions asserted for the undergraduates a different architectural and pedagogical vision. For the college portion of their enterprise, they devised indigenous versions of the courtyards and tutorials prevalent at [Oxford and Cambridge](#)—cited in one breath by the portmanteau name of Oxbridge. In this pair of municipalities, the principles of architecture and landscape are driven by education, and the learning was meant to stretch mind, body, and soul alike. As a consequence, the American embodiment of the combination has been analyzed as pairing “[the monastic quadrangle and collegiate ideals](#).”

At the same time, the institution could tacitly project on a social niveau its demographic oneness—or at least the oneness of its major benefactors. The big givers hailed from [Anglo-Saxon ethnic background](#). (Henry Adams, to ring a characteristically contrarian change on this norm, would have had it instead that his ancestors were Norman.) In keeping with the Protestantism enshrined in the last letter of the acronym WASP, they had little to no stake in the specifics of medieval religion and especially Catholicism. Nonetheless, they were swayed by positive preconceptions about the Middle Ages. In their view, that era had been simpler, purer, and more moral than their own days. Furthermore, the superiorities of the earlier times manifested themselves in ways congenial to Protestant values concerning [hard work and willpower](#). God loves a trier.

Collegiate Gothic architecture generally arrived hand in hand with the adoption by university presidents—such as Chicago’s William Rainey Harper and Princeton’s Woodrow Wilson—of the residential college and the quadrangle as an organizing principle for undergraduate education. In this spirit, Princeton University was put into the Gothic idiom through the construction of [residential buildings](#). As at various other institutions of higher learning in the United States, collegiate Gothic achieved a viselike grip upon New Jersey’s member of the Ivy League only after flirtations with [assorted other styles](#). Cram, one-style-fits-all Gothic totalitarian that he was, found only faulty premises when he saw the campus. If he had had his way, all of these aberrant structures would have been dynamited to make way for the latest and greatest form of the fashion. The integration or imposition of the Crammian mode can be seen in such landmarks as [Cleveland Tower](#) (see Fig. 5.5) and [the chapel](#) (see Fig. 5.6). The latter was the last gasp at Princeton of both pure collegiate Gothic and its costliness in materials and labor. Afterward, dwindling fortunes and soaring prices led to other solutions, even when the semblance of construction in the manner was chosen for the skins of later buildings. In this grand finale, the stained-glass windows of the chapel, with a series dedicated to Malory’s *Le Morte d’Arthur*, Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, John Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, and John Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, memorialize the close connection prevailing between [architecture and literature in the style](#).

Viewed from outside, these edifices contributed unquantifiably to the image of Princeton as a university to be taken in all seriousness, one on a firm footing with its older European and particularly English forebears. The contribution of the collegiate Gothic buildings to the prestige of the institution can be inferred from their salience among the images represented on postcards sold by the university store—and, to rely for a moment on anecdotal evidence, from the frequency with which they are invoked by alumni as having been a motivation for their applying to the college and accepting admission to it. Should it be unexpected that collegiate Gothic is also the stuff of nostalgia? Not for nothing does the [refrain to one of the two beloved reunion songs](#) emphasize “Going back, going back, to the best old place of all.” Old, but not same old same old.

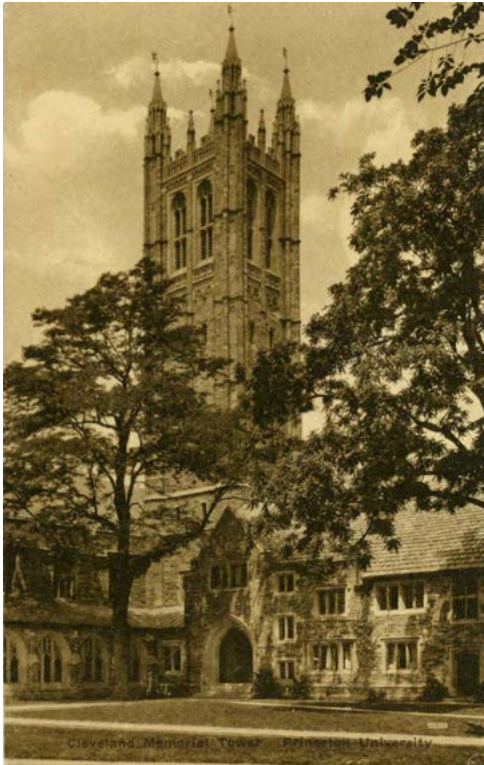


Fig. 5.5 Postcard depicting Cleveland Memorial Tower, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Store, early twentieth century).

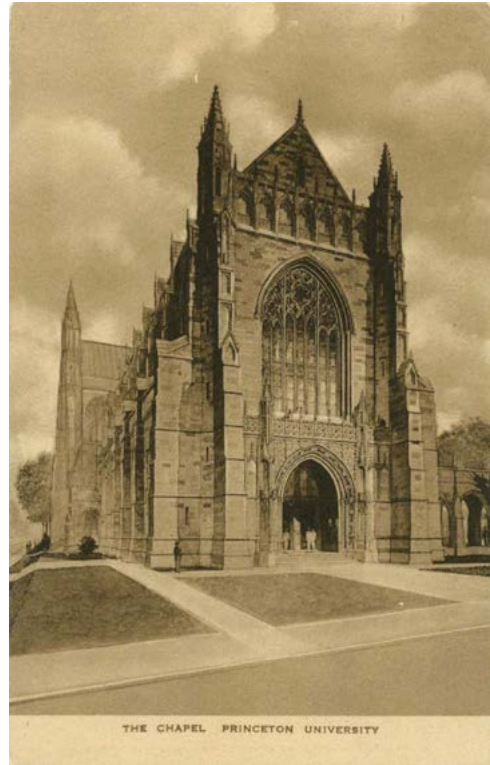


Fig. 5.6 Postcard depicting the Princeton University Chapel, Princeton, NJ (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Store, early twentieth century).



As the name of Cleveland Tower might impel one to suspect, the larger political context once again calls out to be remarked. The head of the university from 1902 to 1910 (see Fig. 5.7) was none other than the future President of the United States from 1913 to 1921, [Woodrow Wilson](#). Princeton took its motto at that time, “In the Nation’s Service,” from the title of [an oration Wilson delivered in 1896](#). He incorporated a nearly identical phrasing into his inaugural address as chief executive of the university in 1902. His predilection for Gothic extended even to the domestic architecture of [his own home](#) in town, in Tudor revival (see Fig. 5.8).



Fig. 5.7 Woodrow Wilson, age 46. Photograph by J. E. Purdy, 1902. Washington, DC, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.



Fig. 5.8 Woodrow Wilson's house at 82 Library Place, Princeton, NJ. Photograph, date and photographer unknown. Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Photo Archives.



The dual commitments of Princeton University to the architecture of collegiate Gothic and to the ideal of national duty were not unrelated. A short book published in 1967 is entitled *Men and Gothic Towers*. Its author cannot be expected to be anything but a diehard Goth, since he reveals that the medievaesque architecture drew him to the college, where he longed to act out the Mark Twainian fantasy of being “a knight living in a feudal castle at King Arthur’s court.” The epigram facing the title page of the book in question divulges that the source of the title phrase was a poem pithily entitled *Princeton* by an *alumnus*: “Here we were taught by men and Gothic towers / Democracy and faith and righteousness / And love of unseen things that do not die.” In 1954, these lapidary lines were inscribed under the archway of McCosh Hall at Princeton (see Fig. 5.9).

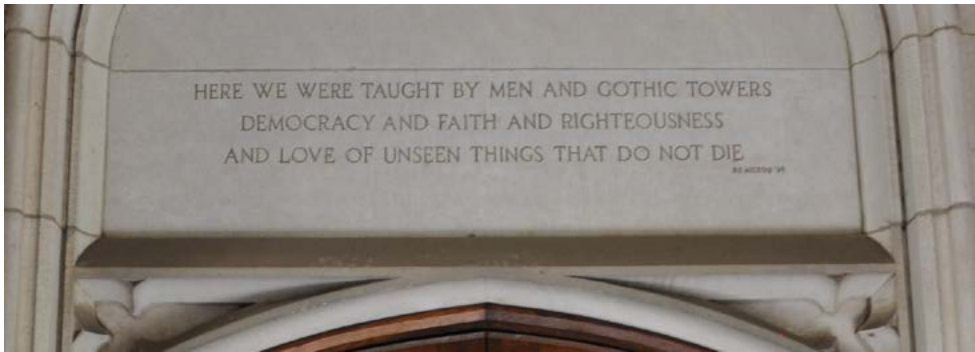


Fig. 5.9 Inscription in McCosh Hall, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ. Photograph by Leon Grek, 2015. Image courtesy of Leon Grek. All rights reserved.

To move to a different and lower stratum of power and society, consider for a moment the masons who toiled for years with mallets and chisels to shape the slabs of stone that transmuted Cram’s vertical visions into reality. No cinder blocks here! The first industrial revolution of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries had given rise to the second one that carried forward to World War I. With its emphasis on the craftsmanship of hand-hewn stone, collegiate Gothic, like its chief cheerleader, bucked against the course of history—a counterrevolution against modernism. It was unaffordably expensive and elitist. At the same time, it stood as a protest in favor of handmade beauty by people who felt discontented and precarious, not just in the cultural aspirations of their social classes but also in their very humanity, because of the so-called machine age. The position of many today is not altogether dissimilar, except that our anxieties about work are prompted not by the factory floor so much as by computers, robots and robotics, and engineering. Perhaps a dose of Gothic now and then would make us feel better—or at least make the modernism of postmodernism go down more easily. Once upon a time, the prescription brought solid results.

Thus, largely owing to Cram, we can speak of a collegiate Gothic style in the United States, and also thanks to him we can conceive of an [Americanization](#) of it. Without necessarily being attuned to the fact, students who spend their undergraduate years at institutions designed, influenced, or inspired by Cram will draw an unspoken equation between his kind of architecture and the way of life (or station of life) they experience in college. Gothic is the *genius loci*. It signifies an existence outside the supposedly real world of either family or career. At many institutions, it entails only lightly constrained freedom to fraternize (or sororize) with short-term siblings within a system that furnishes room and board and sets requirements for what must be accomplished at regularized intervals.

The building blocks of the original design are green and grassy spaces. Called quads at Oxford and courts at Cambridge, these geometrically arranged alternations of verdant sod and solid walkways form the core of amenities that would not seem at all alien to a medieval monk from his own favorite haunts. Students walk the gangplank through lawns to face their destiny in lecture halls. A porter's lodge allows tight micromanagement, so that only the authorized may enter and exit at allowable times. The typical constituents of a British college in the pattern that became standard were lodge, dining hall, and library, but most important were the dormitories, in sets arranged around the quadrangle.

In their transatlantic translations, the fundamentally collegiate underpinnings of Oxbridge remained intact. In American pronouncements that invoke those same transatlantic colleges, a contrast is often intended with the universities of Germany. Both the German and English systems promoted specialization more than American undergraduate education in the liberal arts did. All the same, German-type universities placed relatively greater stress on graduate education, whereas residential colleges in England typically put emphasis on undergraduates. Beyond the commitment in the United States to lower- over upper-level education, the move toward an Oxbridge style of Gothic represented simultaneously also a [commitment to the humanities](#) as well as to the humaneness that such study was hoped to inculcate. The system had defects and limitations, but it helped immeasurably to hold together the world for more than a century. The humanities were aligned with the liberal arts, nonvocational education, and the acquisition of social connections and skills by men, especially gentlemen. Most of the universities were only in the early stages of a long process to separate themselves formally from specific denominations with which they were associated; thus, very few of the institutions failed to have chapels placed conspicuously within their building campaigns.

A third feature of Oxbridge merits underscoring. The desirability of residing near the cultural life and cerebral talent of Oxford and Cambridge spurred growth in population and business activity in both. The isolation of the two English colleges, more of Cambridge than of Oxford, distinguished them from almost all their continental

peers (although, at present, the pair of communities retain only with great effort the mirage of persisting in being, as they once were, residential universities buffered from big cities). The separateness from urban density was a feature imitated when colleges were established in what would become in due course the United States.

Harvard, for example, was [founded in 1636](#) at an eight-mile distance from Boston, even though this reality may not be readily perceptible today. Similarly, the alumni who in 1701 established Yale out of disaffection with the slide of the older college in Massachusetts from Congregational orthodoxy came to New Haven only as their third location. The first two sites in Connecticut where the new institution was billeted were mere flyspecks of towns at the time. In 1746, what shortly became the College of New Jersey, and later Princeton, was started with classes in Elizabeth and Newark by Yale converts to Presbyterianism. In due course, the trustees selected the present-day home of the institution in the center of the state as its permanent site, in no small part [because of its long remove](#) from the dense inhabitations of New York and Philadelphia. Quaintly from today's urbanized perspective, not being in the thick of things was seen to bring dividends.

In the continuing comparison with monasteries set up by reforming monastic orders of the Middle Ages, all three of these Ivy League members began with a potent religious cast: look at the official seals that they use to this day (see Figs. 5.10, 5.11 and 5.12). They were located in "new" settlements. Similarly, they had their origins in assiduous avoidance of the material world and, like their predecessors, their success attracted wealth and growth that were on bad terms with their original spiritual missions.

However unstylish it already was in the late nineteenth century to cling to the doctrine that a building should announce its function in its architecture, such annunciation is the whole point of collegiate Gothic. It advances that claim from its circumference inward. The cloisters of collegiate Gothic America are reminiscent obliquely of the medieval cathedrals and monasteries with their attendant all-male ecclesiastical communities, whose denizens, in the Middle Ages and long afterward, were meant to live celibate or at least unmarried lives. In effect, they were to refrain from the full commerce with the world that family men had.

The state of being closed off has often been conventionally opposed metaphorically as a negative to conditions that are esteemed in American and British Commonwealth cultures. [Quadrangled enclaves](#)—never-never lands segregated from the secular hubbub beyond—are pitted against values associated with open societies. [Cloistered snobs](#) and their ivory towers are set implicitly in opposition to the populism and the real world excluded by its walls. The overprivileged live within a bubble of stone and grass that awaits pricking by the reality outside. Henry Seidel Canby contends that his generation retreated from "the unlovely but immensely vital America outside" and took refuge in "[the Gothic of our imitation monastery](#)." The mimicry was not solely a matter of architecture. Rather, existence within the men's colleges incorporated "[traditions \(not all of them decorous\) of monasticism](#)." Inside the enchanted gardens

of the courtyards, professors and students could engage socially and intellectually with each other within an environment that, despite being built, was in unison idyllic, pseudosylvan, and faux Arcadian. In sum, college was boxed off in cloisters architecturally to make it so metaphorically as well. Little wonder that American universities sprouted clubs or inns called Cloister: Yale, Princeton, and Chicago each had one by this name. The organizations were (grassy) gated communities; their role models, monasteries.

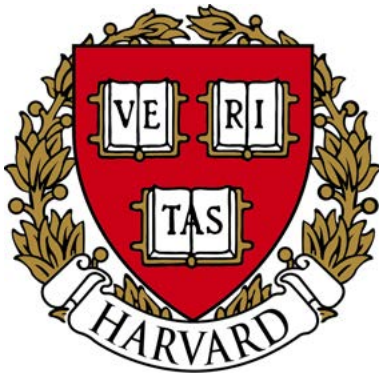


Fig. 5.10 Seal of Harvard University. Image courtesy of Harvard University. CC BY-SA 4.0.



Fig. 5.11 Seal of Yale University. Reproduced in *Harper's Encyclopedia of United States History*, ed. John Lossing, vol. 10 (New York, NY: Harper and Brothers, 1912).



Fig. 5.12 Seal of Princeton University. Image courtesy of Princeton University. All rights reserved.

Sounding much like F. Scott Fitzgerald, the English professor in New Haven describes the charm of romantic promenades lit by moonbeams. The scales fell from his eyes, so that he saw the [value of the unworldliness](#). Canby then [draws a parallel](#) between the study of literature in colleges during his younger days and the activities of choir monks as seen by lay brothers in the Middle Ages. In fact, he goes so far as to claim that much like the jongleur of Notre Dame, scholars in the Gothic Age were undecided and [indecisive over their roles](#) in society and whipsawed between lay and ecclesiastical status. Elsewhere, he characterizes collegiate existence as having a “traditional romance... which has come down to us unbroken from the medieval university, its vagabond students, the Goliards, its [arrogant unrespectability](#).”

The shaded cloisters looked not just backward but forward too. Gothic was a living style, not merely an antiquarian exercise. It was time-tested in the fullest sense of the word. At its optimum, it could be, if not a panacea, at least a palliative for the ills of American society as Cram and others saw them. Through the architecture, life in the educational institution was intended to convey to the young elite a sense of community through participation in spirituality and what could be called the *vita contemplativa*. As in monasticism, a paradox was that the togetherness took shape in seclusion. Another contradiction was that the college was meant to inculcate through community-mindedness a commitment to civic service, but to do so in temporary isolation from the *vita activa*.

## F. Scott Fitzgerald and the Gothic Jazz Age

So we beat on, boats against the current,  
borne back ceaselessly into the past.

—F. Scott Fitzgerald, closing words of  
*The Great Gatsby*

The Gothic of American colleges designed and inspired by Cram and his peers has inscribed generation after generation of students. This effect is exactly what it was intended to accomplish by the architects who drafted it, the tycoons who funded it, and the academics who taught in it. The process began making itself evident before the larger public at the latest in the fictions of writers who came into their own in the Jazz Age. Theirs was the so-called Lost Generation of the 1920s. The epithet captures the disenchantment after World War I that shattered their faith in God and progress, destabilized their values, and motivated them to embrace pleasure and materialism.

Most telling in this cohort of seeming sybarites is F. Scott Fitzgerald (see Fig. 5.13). In an autobiographical essay, he chronicled the reactions that he experienced upon entering the campus of Princeton University. He perceived first two spires and then “the loveliest riot of Gothic architecture in America, battlement linked on to battlement, hall to hall.” Just as important as the edifices is the setting, since the pseudomedieval architecture is arrayed “over two square miles of green grass.”



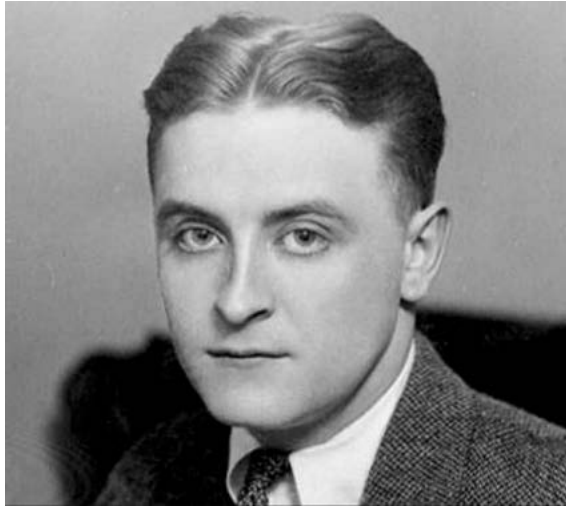


Fig. 5.13 F. Scott Fitzgerald, age 24. *The World's Work*, June 1921, p. 192.

As seen, these surroundings constitute a consciously built landscape. In it, a social class has taken nature as a canvas upon which to depict itself. Its self-construction subsumed not only an understanding of the past but also a vision for the future. To Fitzgerald, collegiate Gothic architecture and landscape architecture constituted a warranty against monotony. In his susceptibility to the glamour of wealth, the fiction writer also construed the seeming age of the style as a bulwark against the impression that the campus had been “all built yesterday at the whim of last week’s millionaire.” Gothic offered a means of diachronic money-laundering. By acquiring cultural capital in buildings of this sort on campuses, the members of the mushroom aristocracy could make their new wealth instantaneously centuries old and culturally valued. The tycoons may have been contriving playgrounds for the affluent, but they gave them a window dressing of gravitas that can be bought more easily when quarried. They transmitted their names and legacies to the future, but grounded them in a seemingly remote and hallowed past: their new money became instantly old.

On the face of it, Fitzgerald’s *This Side of Paradise*, set in the United States of the time, would seem to hold scant promise as a bully pulpit for medievalizing (see Fig. 5.14). It probes the frictions with crass materialism and social ambition that love undergoes. The events take place unambiguously in the twentieth century. Yet portions of the story, especially those staged within the main precincts of Princeton University, would have been inconceivable without the Gothic revival of American colleges. In the cover art for Fitzgerald’s bestseller, the Gothicizing watchtower is accorded as pivotal a place as any the human characters receive (see Fig. 5.15). Nothing more is needed to conjure up the archetypal campus of the early twentieth century, at least in the Princetonian mold, than this style of architecture. The 1982 Scribner Classic edition (see Fig. 5.16) adds to such a thrusting projection three bulbous trees in the middle and college students (then still only young men) in the foreground to complete the picture.

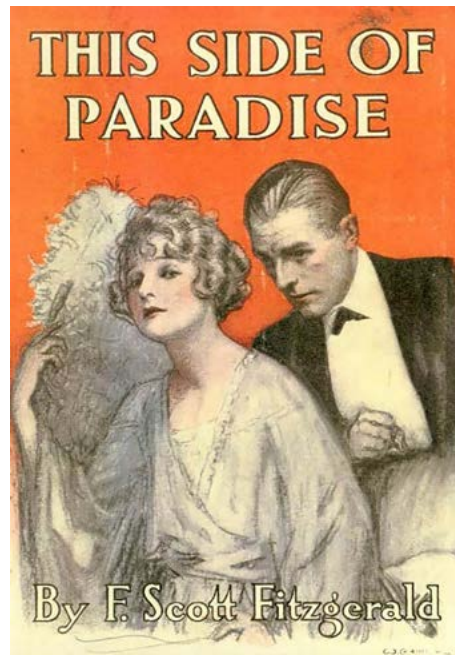


Fig. 5.14 Front cover of F. Scott Fitzgerald, *This Side of Paradise* (New York: Scribner's, 1920). Illustration by W. E. Hill.

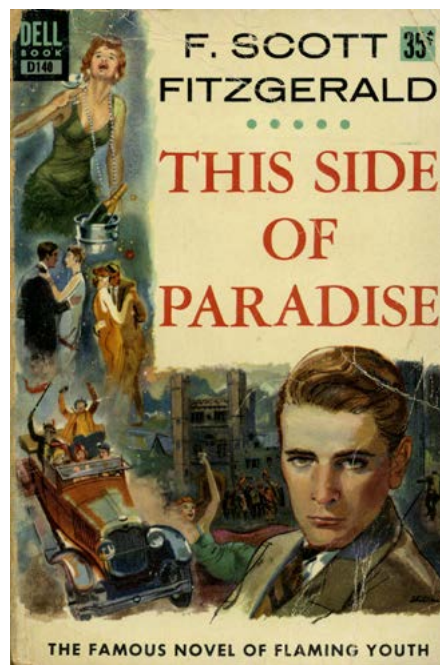


Fig. 5.15 Front cover of F. Scott Fitzgerald, *This Side of Paradise* (New York: Dell Publishing Company, Inc., 1948). Image courtesy of Penguin Random House. All rights reserved.

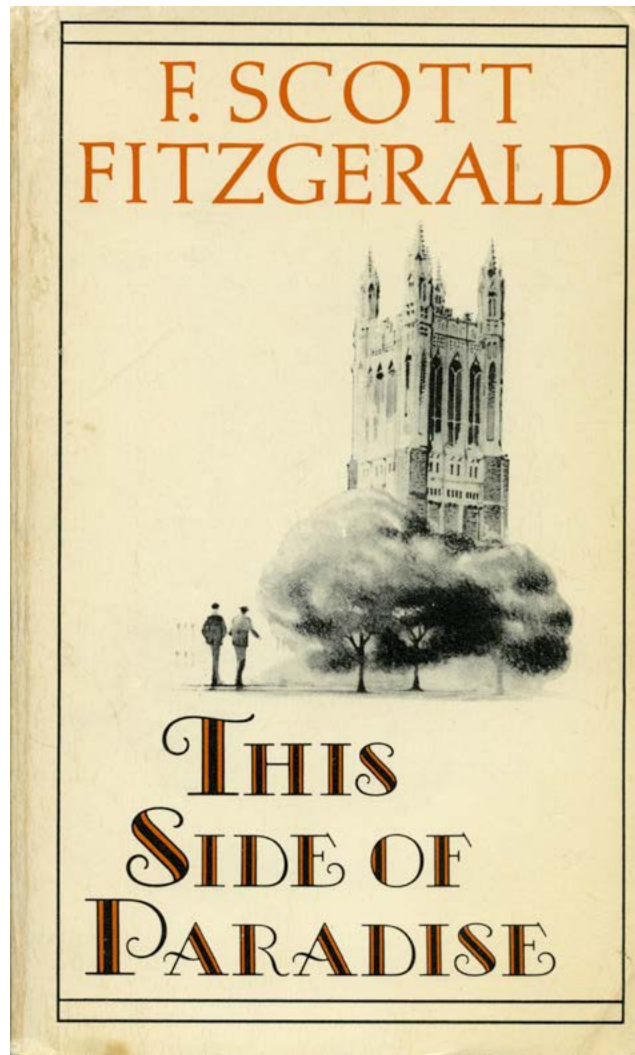


Fig. 5.16 Front cover of F. Scott Fitzgerald, *This Side of Paradise* (New York: Scribner's, 1925). Illustration by Paul Bacon.

In his novel's second chapter, "[Spires and Gargoyles](#)," Fitzgerald describes the "Gothic halls and cloisters" of his fictionalized Princeton as "infinitely... mysterious." Next he characterizes [the impact of the college](#) on the protagonist. In due course he styles this Amory Blaine a "[mediaevalist](#)." Already, the young man has experienced a retarded passage of time, an awareness of melancholy beauty, and a devotion to the mediaeval architecture of his college. He has developed a sense of the constructions as repositories of the bygone and even as a quasi-monastic collocation of nocturnal study and chastity. Through this protagonist, the novelist evinces his grasp of the intimate interplay between buildings and landscape on the ideal Gothic campus. The architects—of turret and terrain—worked in harness out of a shared

concern for what students and instructors would spy either from the windows of their dormitories, classrooms, and libraries, or when outside in transit or in strolling. Just as intended, the views formed part of the education.

Within the text, Fitzgerald interpolates explicitly one twentieth-century architect. He identifies the man under discussion as “Ralph Adams Cram, with his adulation of thirteenth-century cathedrals.” Perhaps more interesting than the homage that this real name pays to the creator of Princeton University’s collegiate Gothic is who stands cloaked behind the pseudonym of another actor in the novelist’s drama. In the first chapter, the cast of characters includes “the Honorable Thornton Hancock, of Boston, ex-minister to The Hague, author of an erudite history of the Middle Ages and the last of a distinguished, patriotic, and brilliant family.” The naming of this city in the Netherlands hints strongly at Henry Adams’s great-grandfather. John Adams spent time from 1781 to 1783 as ambassador (or minister) from the United States to the Dutch Republic. Such fancy guesswork is not needed, however, since Fitzgerald himself spelled out the reference in a letter he addressed to his editor, Maxwell Perkins of the publishing house Charles Scribner’s Sons. Additionally, from Fitzgerald’s biography we learn that long before composing the novel, he met the real-life Adams in Washington. From Adams, it takes a mere hop, skip, and jump to realize that the “erudite history of the Middle Ages” would, of course, be his *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres*. And Amory reflects upon Hancock, evidently viewed through the prism of *The Education of Henry Adams*. In Fitzgerald’s fiction, the savant is “respected by half the intellectual world as an authority on life, a man who had verified and believed the code he lived by, an educator of educators, an adviser to Presidents.”

Fitzgerald’s second novel, published in 1922, was *The Beautiful and Damned*. Its protagonist is the grandson of Adam Patch (the given name is no accident). This Anthony Patch travels to Europe after graduating from Harvard. Among other things, he composes there “some ghastly Italian sonnets, supposedly the ruminations of a thirteenth-century monk on the joys of the contemplative life.” Later, his grandfather tries to dissuade him from writing a medieval history: “Why you should write about the Middle Ages, I don’t know. Dark Ages, we used to call ’em. Nobody knows what happened, and nobody cares.” The novelist refuted just such opinions by interlacing medievalism within the fabric of his bestsellers. (Both the Middle Ages and medieval studies outlasted the 1920s, thank you very much.)

## Late Collegiate Gothic at Duke and Rhodes

The best is usually saved for last.

A conviction about collegiate Gothic holds true through the last glorious expression of the movement. In a 1931 address on “The Unity of Architecture at Duke University and the Ideas That Underlie It,” Duke President W. P. Few (see Fig. 5.17) set forth

a syllogism for the graduating seniors of his university. In the first proposition, the Gothic buildings were intended to provide a beautified setting that would make a “home of the soul of the University.” The second premise was that “these appropriate and beautiful surroundings will have a transforming influence upon students, generation after generation, and even upon the character of the institution itself.” The conclusion, although left implicit, can remain in no doubt: young scholars and the university will be ameliorated *by the beauty and by the medievalness*.



Fig. 5.17 William Preston Few. Photograph by Underwood & Underwood Studios, 1924. Durham, NC, Duke University Archives.

A twofold yearning informed Few’s drive to shape the buildings and the terrain around them at Duke into a particular kind of cultural landscape—a campus. One was to elevate the expanding institution as the first and foremost research university of the South. The other was concurrently to strengthen the collegiate, and spiritual, disposition of the Methodist-affiliated Trinity College out of which the university had sprung in 1925. The unity and clarity of Few’s historicizing vision contributed its share to the notable success of his presidency.

Among the final hotspots of the style, in North Carolina amid the forests of loblolly and longleaf pines, Duke University underwent its breathless, but also breathtakingly high-cost surge of construction, eventuating in the resolutely collegiate Gothic style that prevailed on *the West Campus*. This work, mostly carried out between 1925 and 1930, culminated in the completion of Duke Chapel in 1935 (see Fig. 5.18). Contrary to its modest designation, this building is impressively idiosyncratic, with an uncommonly wide main tower that is modeled upon the Bell Harry Tower of Canterbury Cathedral (see Figs. 5.19 and 5.20).



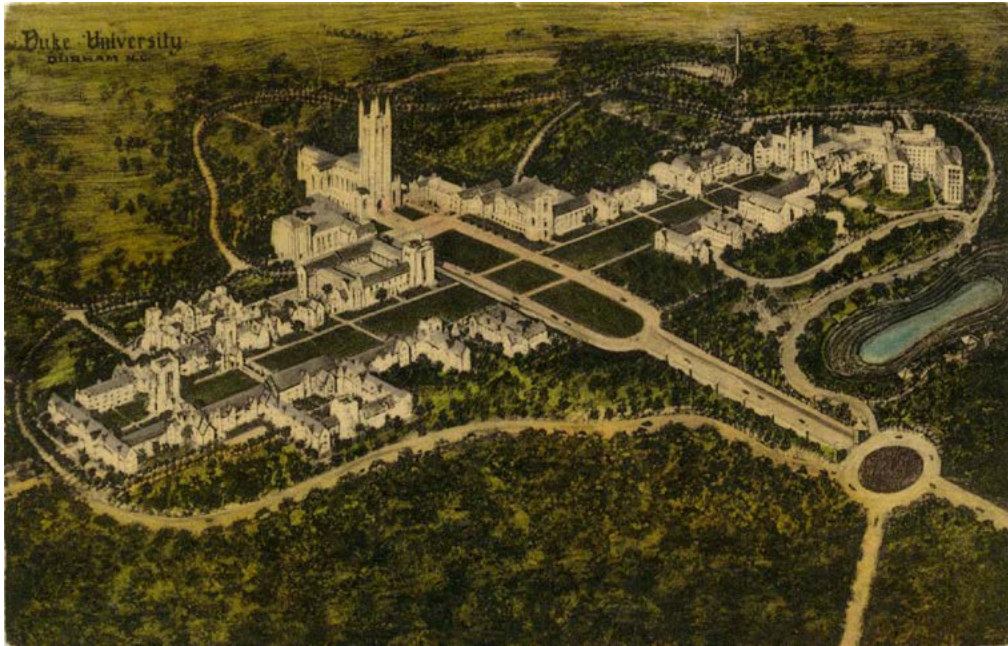


Fig. 5.18 Postcard depicting Duke University Chapel, Durham, NC  
(New York: The Albertype Company, early twentieth century).



Fig. 5.19 Duke University Chapel, Durham, NC. Photograph, ca. 2006. Photographer unknown,  
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Duke\\_Chapel\\_4\\_16\\_05.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Duke_Chapel_4_16_05.jpg)



Fig. 5.20 Bell Harry Tower, Canterbury Cathedral, Canterbury. Photograph by Kai Hendry, 2008, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Canterbury\\_Cathedral\\_from\\_the\\_cloisters.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Canterbury_Cathedral_from_the_cloisters.jpg), CC BY-SA 2.0.

In 1937, two years after the completion of the chapel, the English author Aldous Huxley—today known best for his nightmarishly dystopian portrayal of the future in *Brave New World*, published in 1932—launched into a rhapsody over Duke’s architecture. He described the **sudden epiphany** that a viewer experiences upon discerning the ensemble of structures for the first time. Huxley continues to draw comparisons, to the advantage of the university, between its “composite and synthetic Gothickness” and the aridity of not just “Ruskinian monsters” of the revival in England, but even the genuinely medieval buildings of Oxbridge. In support of his view that neo-Gothic surpasses the original, he invokes none other than Kenneth Clark.

Not all Europeans reacted with the same favor and fervor. Writing on New Year’s Day of 1930, Giuseppe Prezzolini, an Italian-born writer, reacted in nearly the opposite way to his first sight of Duke University: “Yesterday morning I returned from Durham (where I went on the 28th) after having seen rising from a forest a new university, made on the model of Oxford, with little Gothic portholes sealed with glass like the bottom of a bottle. **What a mania these Americans have** for the sham antique!” To this Continental, Duke Chapel would have seemed nothing more than an arrant nave.

Nearly 650 miles west stands **Rhodes College** in Memphis, Tennessee. **In 1925**, its president Charles E. Diehl, a Princeton graduate, committed to the style, and in nearly a century of existence, it has clung consistently and beautifully to the collegiate Gothic ideal (see Figs. 5.21 and 5.22). Diehl drafted a mission statement for his own institution and its physical plant that rejected misbegotten forms of Gothic in favor of what he regarded as the authentic one. The distinguishing features of this collegiate style were to

be *genuineness and beauty*, to him the essential concomitants of liberal education. *The architect* to whom the commission was entrusted had worked as a young associate on the campus of Princeton. As this case goes to show, the Crammian tradition survived in more places than New Jersey even after the Jazz Age was long over. Cram's force of character ensured that the style came in like a lion. Afterward, it may have become meek like a lamb, but it never went out altogether. Across more than one land around the world, collegiate Gothic has abided as a must-see expression of higher education.



Fig. 5.21 Postcard depicting Rhodes College, Memphis, TN (Memphis, TN: Memphis Paper Co., early twentieth century).



Fig. 5.22 Charles Diehl, age 65. Photograph, 1940. Photographer unknown. Memphis, TN, Rhodes College Digital Archives.

## Cathedrals of Learning

Collegiate Gothic concretized the value placed upon “learning for learning’s sake,” as well as upon scholarship as a collective and cumulative process of accretion. At the zenith of the fashion, [knowledge was acquired and arranged in large buildings](#) that were often constructed and sometimes regarded metaphorically—in the best of medieval traditions—as great churches. The navel of the campus at the University of Pittsburgh is known, plain and simple, as “[The Cathedral of Learning](#).” (See Fig. 5.23.) The name of the edifice pairs or mispairs modern secularism with medieval spirituality, just as its reality rightly or wrongly couples modernism with medievalism. The uncompromising Gothic of twentieth-century American universities mutinied against postmedieval materials and making: it rejected an age of iron alloy by reinstating a golden era of uncontaminated stonework. In contrast, the Cathedral is a skyscraper in a radically modified reflex of the style: forty-three stories high, a stone casing on the outside screens a weight-bearing steel frame within. In other words, it is [an ivory tower upheld by a metallic skeleton](#) in a skin of Indiana limestone: Gothic is not supposed to rust. The bastardized framework would have made it anathema to the purism of many hard-nosed American devotees of the Gothic arrival, but somehow it fits as an expression of academic aspirations within a metropolis nicknamed Steel City, with a professional football team called the Steelers. The verticality is essential when truly higher learning is pressed for space in an urban setting. At one stroke, a steel tower with stone cladding gives the city what both the Eiffel Tower and Notre-Dame did to Paris in France, the work of chisels encasing that of blowtorches.



Fig. 5.23 The Cathedral of Learning, Pittsburgh, PA. Composite photograph by Bill Price III, 2009, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cathedral\\_of\\_Learning\\_stitch\\_1.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cathedral_of_Learning_stitch_1.jpg), CC BY-SA 3.0.



In 1886–1887, Cram made a trip to Europe that has been called “a cathedral pilgrimage,” much like the one Adams enjoyed in 1895. During the expedition, the architect underwent a conversion experience that culminated in his adopting High Church [Anglicanism](#). This movement within the Church of England is associated liturgically more closely with Roman Catholicism than with Protestantism. As his numerous disquisitions against modern culture might lead us to suspect—archconservative that he was—Cram and others chose the institutionalization of collegiate Gothic consciously, meaning to secure sanctuaries not just for students and scholars but also for congregants from the larger world. The architecture that Cram and his cronies embossed upon private universities and colleges for both men and women distinguishes more institutions of higher learning than does the famous perennial vine. It might make more sense to speak of a Gothic League than an ivy one—but the style became widespread also on the campuses of [public universities](#).

A particularly memorable instance of collegiate Gothic in a state university would be the much-beloved Michigan Law Quadrangle, [completed in 1933](#) (see Fig. 5.24). This complex is the exception that proves the rule, however. It has elaborate, and often structurally otiose, carved stone corbels and bosses, gables, cupolas, and turrets, all in a Perpendicular style familiar from Tudor England. The whole venture was [funded by an alumnus](#) who never set eyes upon any of the buildings he paid to have constructed in Ann Arbor. Without donors with such affluence and generosity, the extraordinary price tag of materials and workmanship for such construction would have put the architecture beyond the budgets of public institutions.

A strikingly wide span of Gothic styles can be picked out on both the Evanston and Chicago campuses of Northwestern University, a private research facility set up in 1851. The aspiration of the founders to forge an on-the-spot history for their institution can be inferred from its very name, which harks back to [Northwest Territory](#). This designation was official from 1787 until 1803. If what it is called helped to ground the university in American history of the late eighteenth century, Gothic quickly gave it the patina of Oxbridge and the Old World. Consumers are often said to be covetous of instant gratification. In architecture, Gothic provided universities with something less spur-of-the-moment, in the form of immediate ratification.

University Hall (see Fig. 5.25) on the Evanston campus, erected in 1869, is the earliest surviving example at Northwestern University of Gothic, in this case an eclectic [High Victorian Gothic](#). The Garrett Biblical Institute (see Fig. 5.26), a Methodist seminary established in 1853 that is located within the precincts of Northwestern and has affiliations with it, has administration, classrooms, and dormitories in the collegiate Gothic style, most of them [constructed around 1925](#). When key components in the Institute were [announced](#), the Englishness of the design was emphasized, along with its simplicity. As the buildings aged, and the landscaping matured, the hope was that the ensemble would “become an inspiration and a background to the [deepest and sincerest studies](#).” Gothic cause, intellectual effect.





Fig. 5.24 Postcard depicting the Law Quadrangle, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI (Ann Arbor, MI: George Wahr / University Publisher, early mid twentieth century).

In the 1920s, Northwestern took the ambitious step of clustering all its professional schools, in medicine and dentistry, law, and business, on a Chicago campus (see Figs. 5.27 and 5.28). Prospective donors were assured that it would be “[an investment for all time](#).” James Gamble Rogers assumed responsibility for most of the university’s buildings in the Windy City. This was a homecoming of sorts for him. After all, [his first major institutional and Gothic design](#) had been the School of Education at the University of Chicago. The edifices he designed for Northwestern are Gothic simplified, streamlined, and supersized—[not quite skyscrapers](#), but stacked higher than is conventional in collegiate Gothic.



Fig. 5.25 Postcard depicting University Hall, Northwestern University, Evanston, IL (Chicago: The J. O. Stoll Co., early twentieth century).



Fig. 5.26 Postcard depicting the Garret Biblical Institute, Northwestern University, Evanston, IL (Chicago: The J. O. Stoll Co., early twentieth century).



Fig. 5.27 Postcard depicting Alexander McKinlock Memorial Campus, Northwestern University, Chicago, IL (Chicago: Max Rigot Selling Co., early twentieth century).





Fig. 5.28 Postcard depicting the Chicago campus of Northwestern University, Chicago, IL (early twentieth century).

On the east coast, Dean Andrew Fleming West of Princeton (see Fig. 5.29), a medievalist and Latinist, [won a famous victory](#) over the opposition of the university president. The stiff-necked Woodrow Wilson wanted the graduate college to be situated centrally, so that it could be integrated within the campus—and so that in the process its students could be allied with undergraduates. In contrast, the dean prevailed in his scheme to sequester the brand-new complex and its occupants on a knoll beside golf links a half mile from the facilities for those pursuing their baccalaureates. The two men may have been archrivals about the location, but they stood shoulder to shoulder in arguing that the new assemblage of buildings should have a collegiate Gothic blueprint.



Fig. 5.29 Andrew Fleming West. Photograph by Haeseler Photographic Studios (Philadelphia, PA), 1906. Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Archives, Photographs Collection.

In making the case for the style, West saw stony courtyards and ivy-clad walls as especially conducive to affectionate reminiscing about studies in the liberal arts. The issue of memory was hardly beside the point. With conspicuous frequency, major edifices on collegiate Gothic campuses have the word *memorial* in their names. Often the stone carvings and other artwork memorialize trustees, donors, professors, and architects, as well as undergraduates who lost their lives prematurely in wars, accidents, or other misfortunes. The phrase “college of memory” has been formulated to describe one commemorative courtyard, and it could serve nearly as well for many others. West’s advocacy of a quadrangle-and-ivy residential model calqued on Oxbridge is remarkable for the interaction it demands between man-made architecture and [managed landscape](#). Even more memorable is Woodrow Wilson’s proposition that colleges be “[gardens of the mind](#).” The university president’s imperative does not mean automatically that the pleasantries should or would be completely disconnected from the money and power of the worlds surrounding them.

## Gothic Landscaping: Picturesque Perfect

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the picturesque was deemed to be closely related to visual attractiveness—to a scenic value that was tied up with artistic vision. The concept swelled in importance at the very moment when the past was felt to be slipping away in the face of industrialization and modernity. Since the very end of the eighteenth century, [picturesqueness had been invoked](#) in connection with Gothic. The medieval style fits naturally within the contexts of [natural growth and the quaint](#) with which this form of sightliness has been intimately associated. In 1852, Andrew Jackson Downing, an outspoken advocate of the American Gothic revival, submitted: “[As picturesqueness denotes power](#), it necessarily follows that all architecture in which beauty of expression strongly predominates over pure material beauty, must be more or less picturesque.” The architect was not to live long, but through his charisma in person and [publications](#), he promoted a vision of rural Gothic that sent ripples still measurable in most subsequent revivals of the style in the United States. His rural form eschewed all the gloom (or Walpolian [gloomth](#)) of its romantic antecedent—the Gothick that had been spelled with a terminal *k*. Not for him were the dour castles that some other designers relished.

Hard on the heels of Downing’s pronouncement, Gothic revival took hold along the wealthy banks of the Hudson River Valley. The phrase “castles on the Hudson” is apt. The waterway had been likened to the riverscape of the Rhine very influentially by James Fenimore Cooper in a [novel from 1832](#). In time, the topographic likenesses between the two watercourses were accentuated by architectural ones. The slopes along the stream of water in New York became studded with sham castles and ruins in the picturesque image of the medieval and medievaesque Rhine as Americans

imagined it. Many such residences have since been demolished, but enough stay standing for the vogue not to be altogether forgotten.

As revived in England, Gothic architecture deserves special credit for having entailed a thoughtful engagement with landscape, including gardens. The imbrication of buildings with their built environments already typified the grandiosity that two monuments to early Gothic revivalism display. One of these zany projects was Horace Walpole's Strawberry Hill, begun in 1750 as an outgrowth from a cottage at Twickenham, on the Thames near London. The other was William Beckford's [Fonthill Abbey](#) in Wiltshire, completed in 1807. The characteristic of implanting such revival buildings in landscapes carefully engineered to seem natural was maintained through the best of the collegiate style in the United States.

If Gothic landscape and architecture were joined like mortise and tenon, so too were Gothic architecture and literature. The style of both residences was promoted by the eccentric Gothic writers who constructed them. Thus, Walpole was the novelist of the camp Gothic *The Castle of Otranto*, while Beckford wrote *Vathek*. Both men were dilettantes, but chest-thumping and even megalomaniacal ones who patronized architects. Walpole went so far as to call Strawberry Hill "[a very proper habitation](#) of, as it was the scene that inspired, the author of the *Castle of Otranto*." First, he built his house and grounds out of an antiquarianism that encompassed study of sites and texts alike. He then drew upon his home and its surroundings as a fountainhead of inspiration and a backdrop for the fiction he confected. In both cases, as a "true Goth" he prided himself upon [imaginative as opposed to imitative powers](#). The inaugural edition of *The Castle of Otranto* had a frontispiece that displayed a couple in a derelict crypt, with a pointed arch in a state of suggestive collapse (see Fig. 5.30). In 1765, Walpole subtitled the second edition *A Gothic Story* (compare Fig. 5.31, first edition).

Both the early Gothick and much later collegiate Gothic may be described as fake or at least energetically reimagined history. This fanciful past is planted in an environment that is equally faux, even while pretending to be consummately natural. The fascination for the imaginary days of old fostered the fetish for creating fanciful contexts in which to relive them. The two attractions were encouraged together by the emphasis on idealized communities that imbued the Arts and Crafts movement on both shores of the Atlantic Ocean.

Collegiate Gothic communities were set in designed landscapes that belonged through cultural atavism to the world of Gothic novels. Those fictions play out in settings such as ruined abbeys, churches, castles, or cemeteries, all of them far from cities. The style abided by this tendency to favor the rural or rustic over the urban. The argument has been made that campuses were not the only places in the American countryside where a twistily picturesque design took hold. Under the direct influence of Gothic, suburbs too adopted an alternation between [pointy linearity and gentle curviness](#) that persists to this very day.





Fig. 5.30 Isabella's escape from the castle. Illustration by R. Courbould, 1764. Published in Horace Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto* (London: Thomas Lownds, 1764), frontispiece.

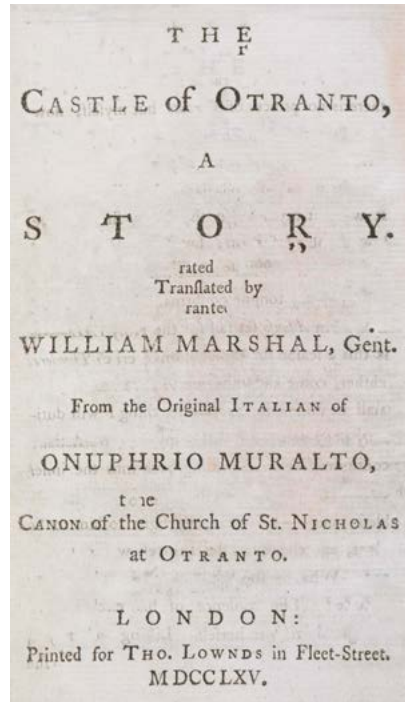


Fig. 5.31 Title page of Horace Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto* (London: Thomas Lownds, 1764).

The look of suburbia is marked by “[architectural informality](#), winding serpentine roads, and continuous swaths of lawn.” The suburbs have been depicted both relentlessly and remorselessly in Gothic and horror literature, television, and film. Consequently, the phrase “[suburban Gothic](#)” has become entrenched in cultural studies relating to US pop culture. This subgenre occupies its own place of unwholesome honor, sandwiched between the shuddering horror in downtown urban Gothic and its nonidentical twin in [backwoods rural Gothic](#). The happier opposite of “sublime suburbanism” remains underused. These other halfway homes between town and country are paradisiacal rather than hellish, tend to be serene rather than sinister, and comprise beautiful outdoors rather than ugly basements. Sometimes the multiplicity makes keeping the sundry Gothics straight impossible. The term can mean too many things for comfort, but no one ever said that language would or should be comfortable.

From the beginning, the districts under consideration were modeled on the Middle Ages. They were meant to allow their denizens to develop manual skills alongside intellectual ones. As we have seen, this idealistic objective can be traced back to William Morris's daydream of people living “in little communities [among gardens](#)

and green fields.” In his protosocialism the Englishman did not envisage for a moment an arrangement like an American campus: perish the thought! At the same time, his zeal for communes lent itself to appropriation by those who sought to make colleges places in which youth could cultivate sound minds in sound bodies.

The many intersections between collegiate Gothic and landscape architecture were no mere coincidence. Rather, the style imprinted upon campus design many of the same positive effects that the City Beautiful Movement had exercised upon urban planning in the 1890s and early 1900s. In oddball ways, it caused Victorian pleasure gardens to coalesce with the equivalent pieces of ground in medieval monasteries. All the beauty was owed to the willingness of major donors to support the costs of shaping topography worthy of collegiate Gothic—and vice versa. We could speak of chlorophyll-anthropy. This form of largesse complemented the construction of libraries that could be called bibliophilanthropy. Among practitioners, the well-known landscape gardener and architect Beatrix Farrand put the matter well when she asserted that education depends on more than knowledge and theory gained from reading and study. In her phrasing, the book of nature complements mere facts with “the subtle inspiration of beauty.”

Gothic campuses lend themselves well to beauteous built landscapes because of the age-old connection between colleges and cloisters. Both have banked on scenery to inform what goes on within and around it. The orderly asymmetry that underlies the style’s architecture holds true for plantings and topography within it as well, as each is intended to achieve or impose an alternation between busy bustle and restful repose. Just as music relies at least as heavily upon the silence of pauses as upon the sounding of notes, so the institutional design of monasteries and universities requires the full stops of these oblong geometric shapes to punctuate the sentences of space. The greens have meanings much more transcendental than any of the transit or recreation that takes place upon and through them. They conjure up the illusion of countryside within a city that is designated formally by the Latin phrase *rus in urbe*, or “country in city.” As landscape, they exist in a sublime equipoise with the architecture. For that reason, quadrangles—above all, Gothic ones—deserve recognition as basic units in landscape architecture.

The campus of the ideal American college comprised a designed and deliberate interstice between or around buildings. A central green space, it was meant to be handsome and made a distinctive national contribution to landscape design. Once again, it bears remembering that the term campus originated in 1774 and anticipated only slightly the Revolutionary War. Such spaces exerted an allure that in part consisted in seclusion from the smoke and mirrors of the urbanism outside. Landscaping afforded one ready means to achieve separation from the world that would foster contemplation and introspection.

Trees were so essential to the makeup of campuses and especially collegiate Gothic ones that some college heads saw themselves as the academic equivalents

of Johnny Appleseed. The first president of the University of Oklahoma designed the institutional seal to depict a man strewing seed. One of this leader's own aims in directing his institution was to make "a thousand trees grow where none had grown before." The chief executives of these institutions may not have spiced their motivational speechifying to staff and students with expressions along the lines of "arboreal Gothic" or "Gothic forest theory," but the effect was similar. They wanted their pseudocloisters and sham castles to contain chapels of both stone and trees.

## Trees as Nature's Cathedrals

The Gothic church plainly originated in a  
rude adaptation of the forest trees with all  
their boughs to a festal or solemn arcade... —

Ralph Waldo Emerson

The largest houses of worship in the Middle Ages were much more denaturalized than were most other buildings of the time, seeing that most medieval homes and barns were constructed of far more natural organic materials. Yet from another perspective the cathedrals nonetheless came closest to nature, so long as naturalism was understood to express upon earth a marvelously divine order of all creation. Gothic buildings and the Gothicized built environment were perceived to be intimately connected. In fact, today they are still felt to be *closely related*. Reasons are not difficult to pinpoint. Such architecture, especially in the great churches, was envisioned as at once a living organism and an artificial fabrication. The style was truly radical, to speak etymologically, in that it was rooted and grounded. As such, it occupied an interface between nature and art.

Lately, resemblances have been pointed out between *places of prayer made by men and giant nests constructed by termite colonies* (see Figs. 5.32 and 5.33). By the same token, tall rocks containing cavities lined with purple or violet crystals are commonly called amethyst cathedrals. Similarly, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, *suitably shaped formations* in echoey caverns were compared with features of Gothic architecture. Deep time, conceptualized in the eighteenth century by James Hutton, applied in the nineteenth century by Charles Darwin, and coined in the twentieth century by *John McPhee*, rattled the chronology by which the age of the earth was reckoned. The universe was en route to becoming the multiverse. On that account, drawing analogies between the man-made and natural worlds may have rendered unnerving concepts more manageable by making them more familiar. Calling termite mounds, crystal geodes, or caves after cathedrals made such formations more proximate to the products of human art and toil.

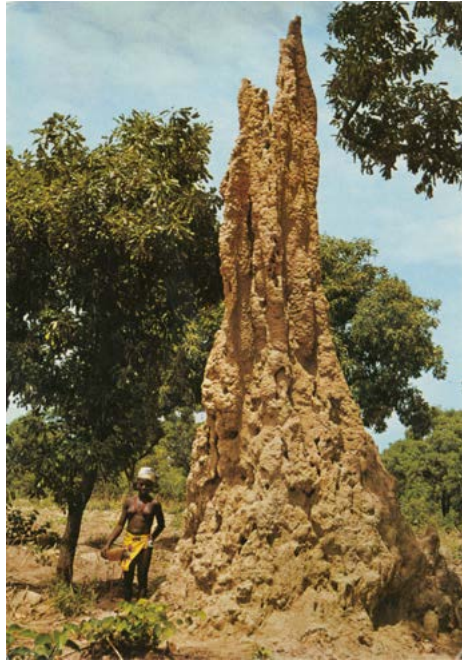


Fig. 5.32 Postcard depicting a “termite cathedral” in Folona, Mali (Eurolux, ca. 1975).



Fig. 5.33 The Basílica i Temple Expiatori de la Sagrada Família, Barcelona. Photograph by Bernard Gagnon, 2009, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sagrada\\_Familia\\_01.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sagrada_Familia_01.jpg), CC BY-SA 3.0.

The likeness between Gothic and nature that has been drawn longest and most often likens it to the grandest and oldest of trees (and vice versa). As opposed to many other styles of architecture and landscape design, this one tends toward a kind of cultivated wilderness—a forest Gothic or a Gothic wildness. In 1724, William Stukely likened the interior of Gloucester cathedral to “a walk of trees, whose touching heads are curiously imitated by the roof.” Already in the early sixteenth century, an author designated as “Pseudo-Raphael” had advanced the so-called forest or [tree theory](#). This speculation held that Gothic style derived from uncut trees, the sprays of which were bent and [plaited to form pointed arches](#). A visualization of this same metaphor is placed as a guidepost in a volume on Gothic architecture published in London in 1813. The frontispiece displays the design for a “[wicker cathedral](#)”—a fanciful Gothic church fashioned of wickerwork (see Fig. 5.34). The conceit rests on an implicit assumption that the construction of cathedrals replicates in stone the vegetation of trees and shrubbery. The similitude is sufficiently obvious that when later authors or artists take it up, we should not assume automatically that they were versed in the minutiae of this or that architectural theory. François-René de Chateaubriand imagined cathedrals to have arisen from the inspiration of trees in Celtic forests. [Victor Hugo himself](#) drew an analogy between the pillars in a great house of worship and trunks in a forest.

The comparisons of Gothic ecclesiastical interiors with copses, and of stone pillars and vaults with arboreal trunks and branches, pervaded romantic writing. Early architectural historians assumed falsely that churches of this kind were meant consciously to replicate stands of trees in forests where [Druids](#) had once enacted their pagan rituals. Nevertheless, such lax speculation provoked notable opponents: who would want to go out on that theoretical limb? For instance, [Friedrich Schlegel](#) dismissed the untested and untestable hypothesis of vegetal origins. Later, Ruskin rebuffed not the analogy—he himself lauded “the arborescent look of lofty Gothic aisles” in *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*—so much as the use of it to theorize about the [origins of Gothic as a whole](#). Despite such rebuttals, the theory persisted that this brand of architecture had [treelike origins](#).

The trend toward identifying the tallest of plants with cathedrals received an extra nudge in the New World. Americans were frantically clearing their whole continent of primeval forests that had been inhabited by aboriginal peoples who were sometimes conceived as noble savages and who thus picked up the mantle (or other clothing) from virtuous pagans of antiquity and noble heathens of the Middle Ages. Instead of the original woods, the nineteenth-century nation-builders raised up constructions of artificial trees loftier than the natural ones, sometimes even veritable groves of living stonework. The added push came from the rationale that was applied to justify the establishment of national parks. The natural resources of forests, minerals, land, and water constituted a heritage that legitimated the young nation culturally, just as the great medieval churches that soared upward did for France, Italy, and Germany. Arboreal and geological cathedrals created by nature were no more to be logged



or quarried than the ones made by human beings in Europe were to be leveled. As the citizens of the United States made a religion or cult of nature, the new preserves became **sacred spaces**. Tourists were pilgrims who journeyed to do homage to the relics protected in these national shrines. Yellowstone, the first park in what would become an immense system, was signed into existence by President Ulysses S. Grant on March 1, 1872.



Fig. 5.34 "Wicker Cathedral." Etching by W. & D. Lizars (Edinburgh), 1813. Published in James Hall, *Essay on the Origin, History, and Principles, of Gothic Architecture* (London: W. Bulmer & Co., 1813), frontispiece.

By no accident, in that same year [the first formal arboretum](#) in the United States was established in Boston. If [nature was art, trees were paint brushes](#) plied across the canvas of landscapes. The likeness is not meant idly. That arboreal garden rose within the same decade in which the first art museums were founded in Boston, Washington, and New York. In other words, museums of art and museums of trees were established simultaneously. The common ground was aesthetic and artistic, with a specifically Gothic accent.

Advocate extraordinaire for the preservation of the wilderness and open space was the Scottish-American John Muir. He connected the dots between the natural and the national better than anyone had ever done before. Toward that end, this proto-environmentalist privileged in many writings mountains and forests of North America over great churches of Europe. At the same time, he likened the two phenomena, natural and man-made. Back to nature became identical with [back to Gothic](#). As the frontiers closed, Muir sought staunchly to have tracts of unspoilt land maintained as nature's cathedral. By being made legally into national parks and forests, the natural features, flora, and fauna were collectively consecrated as places of devotion and [houses of religion](#). The divine was immanent in natural as much as in manufactured marvels, and God performed a miracle by becoming incarnate in the features of nature as he did in his son—by implication, Mother Nature or Mother Earth presupposed Mother of God and vice versa. In due course, the idea of the [wilderness cathedral](#) became enshrined in local toponyms. A granite mountaintop in Yosemite National Park (see Fig. 5.35) would be called [Cathedral Rocks and Spires](#); likewise, a formation in Bryce Canyon National Park in Utah, with a shape not unlike a westwork tower with a long nave behind, is named [The Cathedral](#) (see Fig. 5.36).

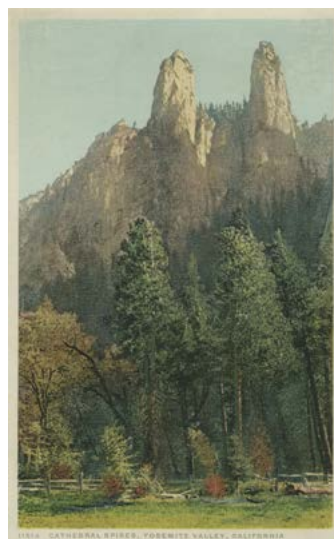


Fig. 5.35 Postcard depicting “Cathedral Spires,” Yosemite Valley, CA  
(Detroit, MI: Detroit Publishing Co., early twentieth century).



Fig. 5.36 Postcard depicting "The Cathedral," Bryce Canyon National Park, UT (Omaha, NE: Union Pacific Railroad, ca. 1944).

To return by way of the living cathedral to plants, the comparison of the arboreal with the ecclesiastical is particularly obvious in comments upon two species of sky-high plants, redwoods and sequoias. The shared vertical thrust of Gothic churches and natural trees clearly drove the analogy. Muir wrote already that forests of these tall California conifers constituted "majestic living temples, the grandest of [Gothic cathedrals](#)." Nor do the evergreens need to be as spectacularly large as redwoods or sequoias to resemble immense places of prayer. Consider Cathedral Drive, a dirt backroad in Lakewood, New Jersey, as it existed in the 1910s (see Fig. 5.37). In 1901, a columnist rhapsodized that a photograph of the drive and the treetops swaying above it would recall "[an archway of rugged grandeur](#) resembling the nave of a cathedral, from which its name is derived." By the twentieth century, [this analogy verged on vapidness](#), especially in America. Thanks to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, likening evergreens to great churches became a topos in the United States. His lovely "[My Cathedral](#)," a Petrarchan sonnet, maps out the similarities and dissimilarities between conifers and cathedrals by comparing their architectural appearance, materials, builders, embellishment, sounds, and manner of worship.

Another expression of the commensurability between tall plants and medieval architecture in the American context was that architects who raised collegiate Gothic buildings interspersed them sometimes with screens of trees and shrubs. This arboricultural rotation was a means of demarcating and enclosing the [perimeter of the campus](#). Also related is the incorporation of arboreal motifs into the tracery of [the Bok Singing Tower](#), a Gothic bell tower built in a sun-dappled preserve in Florida.





Fig. 5.37 Postcard depicting Cathedral Grove, Lakewood, NJ  
(Lakewood, NJ: A. P. Conklin, ca. 1910–1920).

The analogy did not disappear even in the late twentieth century. At one extreme, a [hybrid cultivar](#) developed to replace the trees killed in America by the so-called Dutch elm disease is called “cathedral.” It was thus named because when planted in close rows the [upper boughs form arches](#) like those ubiquitous in Gothic great churches. Owing to this quality in growth, American elms were the archetypal cathedral trees in the nineteenth century. Their resemblance to places of worship led observers to comment on the [superiority of nature to architecture](#). Beyond that, the stateliness of these botanical beauties induced comparisons between them and English houses of prayer. Numerous observers recognized that while the New World continent might lack original stone cathedrals, [it had in these plants their arboreal equivalents](#).

To move from the tree-killing fungus to the actual Netherlands, “[The Green Cathedral](#)” is a landscape display by the artist Marinus Boezem. The project was developed in 1978 and planted in 1987 in Flevoland, a polder or tract of ground reclaimed from the sea (see Fig. 5.38). This two-part specimen of what could be called silviculture involved creating, by analogy to photography, both a positive and a negative image of a great church. The plus side required the placement of dozens

upon dozens of Italian silver poplars in the shape not of the columns but rather of the outline of the cathedral of Reims. Together, the 178 trees constitute a built forest that is simultaneously an architectural complex. The negative involved the cutting of a clearing in the shape of the same edifice from a uniform growth of trees. The Dutch installation gets at a correspondence particular to the original Gothic, and one that is commonly encoded into the collegiate form of it, between seemingly natural forests and man-made buildings.

The manipulated landscape also actualizes a pipe dream that the eighteenth-century English poet Alexander Pope had articulated, of [growing a medieval Gothic cathedral out of poplars](#). Do grand ideas about the biggest house of prayer grow on trees? In the following century, the American architect Montgomery C. Meigs transferred Pope's notion to the elm and refined it with a view toward [cultivating a great church of such trees in Philadelphia](#) to replicate the plan of Notre-Dame at Paris, or perhaps punning on the Latin botanical name of the genus, the cathedral of Ulm. In the present millennium, the landscape architect who has designed garden installations that play similarly upon the relationship of architectonics and trees is Giuliano Mauri. He implanted a series of "vegetal cathedrals" that allude to the religious and aesthetic structure of great churches by training tens of trees to be columns with tops that curve in upon themselves in vaults (see Fig. 5.39).



Fig. 5.38 Marinus Boezem, *The Green Cathedral*, 1978–1987, landscape display. Almere, The Netherlands. Photograph by Marco van Middelkoop, 2014.  
Image courtesy of Aerophoto. All rights reserved.



If the trunks of trees have been regarded as resembling the piers of cathedrals, skyscrapers have been viewed at times as fusing the organic best of both. This metaphorical fusion of the arboreal and the architectural was evident in Louis Sullivan, a patriarch of its American manifestation. Both before and after these buildings, the designers who raised all sorts of edifices in Gothic revival styles on college campuses took tacit advantage of the resemblances between trees and turrets.



Fig. 5.39 Giuliano Mauri, *Cattedrale Vegetale*, 2001.  
Landscape installation. Trento, Italy.

## Collegiate Gothic Havens

Gracious God, we thank you for the vision of Ralph Adams Cram, John La Farge and Richard Upjohn, whose harmonious revival of the Gothic enriched our churches with a sacramental understanding of reality in the face of secular materialism; and we pray that we may honor your gifts of the beauty of holiness given through them, for the glory of Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, in glory everlasting. Amen.

By the early twentieth century, life was already very much accelerated from what it had been before industrialization. Collegiate Gothic buildings were intended to procure their occupants a respite from the overbearing harshness of nonstop existence, industry, and materialism. Like revival churches, they delivered stout protection from the exhausting social Darwinism that the American novelist Sinclair Lewis described in 1906 in *The Jungle*. This ambition could be berated with finger-wagging as escapism and exclusivity. Was such a capital-intensive solution required as an alternative to the winner-take-all dogfights of the everyday routines outside their walls? The architecture of the colleges could also be seen as a true hedge that was not furnished by most other institutions within society at that (or any other) time. Among other things, the style helped to shelter and ratify the pursuit of basic research in natural sciences, the social sciences, and the humanities.

The Gothic-minded architects built spaces to envelop their denizens within the *medievaesque ideals* of contemplative life, rusticity, and spirituality. Beginning in the twelfth century, the enclosure of the monastery was allegorized as the *cloister of the soul*. One side was inward-directed self-contempt; another, outward-turned contempt of the world. A third aspect was love of God; the fourth, love of one's neighbor. The quadrangles of collegiate Gothic enclosed the students in like fashion. The buildings cost a king's ransom and entailed future disbursements for maintenance and operation, but they were a long-term investment in higher education, culture, intellect, and artistry. Just as the most perspicacious of early twentieth-century observers prophesied, campuses in the style stand as monuments to confute any facile fault-finding of the Gilded Age for being "wholly *given up to a selfish materialism*." The administrators and architects who participated in the solicitations for funding from former students and others reasoned that the expense of Gothic would repay itself through lower overhead later. They did the math right. The stonework has lasted now for decades, better than wood, brick, or concrete: the cost has been amortized over a century or more. Nor do the financial returns end with lower maintenance. A prestigious appearance could elicit *larger donations*. The scorecard of campaigns

for giving argues that they were right: the Gothicized cloisters and towers draw graduates back for remunerative homecomings, and the loyalty of alumni is cultivated by nurturing nostalgia for the arches.

The architecture should not be judged solely or even primarily with jaundiced eyes. The adage “[unity in variety](#)” surfaces again and again in writings of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in conjunction with Gothic. This quality made the style a good match for a nation in the throes of expeditious industrialization and demographic diversification. Individually, the buildings were constructed with the consistency that arose from reliance upon familiar architectural features. At the same time, the menu of *mélanges* that could be fashioned from the relatively limited tally of ingredients was infinite. The edifices have a unified look, but they are never identical. Variety and whimsy, in gargoyles, chimeras, ceiling bosses, plaques, and other unique features, abound. While the overall order may validate the status quo, the rough-hewn grotesqueries tucked here and there permit mild satire of those same authorities. The distinctive features were often not dictated by the overall design of the architects, but instead expressed the personalities and perspectives of the masons who hewed the slabs of stone. These one-of-a-kind elements in collegiate Gothic and its close ecclesiastical relatives account for the gargoyle-friendly tours and booklets found in bookstores and on the websites of many American colleges and churches. Such phenomena are New World equivalents to the postcards and handouts that show local pride in parishes with old buildings and artworks throughout Europe.

While standing outside a prevailing materialism, the collegiate Gothic buildings were not completely detached from society. Rather, they were meant to foster service of it. In turn, the surrounding community took pride in them. A multiplicity of postcards, the centrality in them of flagpoles with the red, white, and blue flapping in the breeze, and the appropriation of Brookings Hall (then still “University Hall”) of Washington University in Saint Louis as the nerve center for the World’s Fair of 1904 bring home that the architecture had a face that looked outward as well as one that turned inward. The expense and solidity of the edifices were meant to achieve prestige by showing that the United States, now more than four hundred years after the discovery of the New World by Christopher Columbus, had reached maturity and come into its own. What better way to demonstrate age than through its hallowed plural, the Middle Ages?

The desire for venerable olden days as a counterpoise to modernity explains a pronouncement by Woodrow Wilson about the benefits of what he calls “Tudor Gothic style.” First, the architecture [adds a millennium](#) in an eyeblink to the history of the university. Second, it brings home “derivation and lineage” by pointing the imagination of all viewers to “the historical traditions of learning in the English-speaking race.” On a similarly grand scale, collegiate Gothic promises to condition future students to the world destiny of the United States that has arisen from the nation’s mediation of earlier English culture and civilization across both time and

space. The style offered instantaneous roots in a past that commanded high prestige at the time. The future president of the United States did not need to know that by the time he formulated this thought, the value of the architecture for teleporting the viewer [back hundreds of years](#) had been recognized at least since the early nineteenth century.

Ralph Adams Cram, an equally great Anglophile, also made assumptions based on a [racial Anglo-Saxonism](#). Yet the zero-tolerance architect did so without descending into either the frequency or the vehemence of the racism that vitiates many parts of Wilson's legacy. Much like Henry Adams before him, Cram posited that his compatriots felt an almost atavistic and instinctive attraction to Gothic, as an alternative to modernism. In his eyes, his fellow Americans had a commitment to constitutive values of morality and artistry that extended even to the [construction techniques](#) employed in realizing the style in actual building.

Gothic furnished overarching unity for the variety of the university. This capacity could be taken far beyond a strictly academic setting. In the case of the Brooklyn Bridge, the perceived potential of the fashion to allow for diversity while simultaneously fostering a shared oneness grew to have much broader symbolic implications. By way of the bridge—by the mere fact of itself being one—the style could cater to a nation that aspired to welcome the peoples, or at least some of them, of the world.

The Gothic quadrangle contained considerable potential for beauty and romance. At the same time, it was allied with a vision that meant college to be a place and time for the development of not just an elite but in fact one sharing similar opinions and tastes. An emphasis on such like-mindedness can readily lead to the [exclusion of the unlike](#). In this context, with its pretend castle keeps and battlements, the style made the interiors into no-go zones for unwanted outsiders. Just as cathedral closes had done in the Middle Ages, collegiate Gothic shut in and protected the gowns of campuses within from the towns of the municipalities without. The revival had originated alongside gusto for heraldry and genealogy, and the architecture grew along with the loyalty to their undergraduate institutions shown by affluent families. [At their best](#), the college precincts were not gilded cages or even limestone lazarettos, less protective bubbles than safety devices such as airbags or parachutes.

Races, ethnic groups, religions, and sexualities have grown far more numerous in the demographic ferment of many European countries as well as the United States, and the purview of world history even more multilayered. With the benefit of enlightened hindsight, aspects of the unblinking pronouncements made by early twentieth-century exponents of collegiate Gothic can cause cringes or wincings nowadays. Yet the gut instinct of mooring a rapidly changing present in the cove of a more stable and sheltered past, even if one with only imagined stability, has nothing inherently askew about it. The dangers of not heeding what has happened in earlier times exceed the pitfalls of subscribing at least initially to romantically distorted preconceptions of the long-ago.

## Ivy League and Ivory Tower

Cope and Stewardson, the brace of Quaker architects from Philadelphia who pieced together the backbone of Bryn Mawr College, made buildings in the Tudor Gothic style its vertebrae. These edifices went a long way in institutionalizing the presence of [ivory towers](#), the light-colored collegiate Gothic ones—not wrought from actual animal tusks or teeth—on the campuses of many private universities in the United States. Usually disparaging, this turret syndrome now connotes timelessness, woolly-headed ideas, book learning, pure knowledge, perquisites, and seclusion. [In contradistinction, the real world](#) signifies the ever tick-tocking clock, unsentimental realities, empiricism, instrumental knowledge, sharing the common lot, and immersion in the everyday.

Mind reading rates as risky under the best of circumstances, but let us double down and make a truly high-stakes gamble on a long shot: if actual towers lurk in the thoughts of people who speak of ivory ones today in the United States, most of them have pointed arches and crenellations. Just examine the images that come to light in a search for the phrase “ivory tower.” In the architectural setting of American universities, such a projection is even more easily demonstrated to be effectively a [Gothic tower](#).

The medievalist Andrew Fleming West of Princeton University had published on the Anglo-Saxon monk Alcuin, who, around 800 CE, served for Charlemagne a function that today would be styled director of education. As dean of the Graduate College, West sought to adapt to the modern world an updated [Carolingian form of monasticism](#). Whereas little of the promotional material for elite colleges from the early twentieth century puts on display the ivy-green leaves of the genus *Hedera*, the Gothic buildings are ubiquitous as a stony proclamation of their educational goals—and of the financial resources they possess for realizing those objectives. One Englishman wrote in 1899 to an influential architectural journal “some of the dearest associations of college life cluster round [ivy-mantled crenellated towers](#).” At the same time, the ivory and ivy towers were not at all distant and disengaged from the aims and aspirations of the United States as a nation.

When the three-day gala to celebrate the completed construction of the Graduate College took place in October 1913, Woodrow Wilson had already bolted from Princeton for the White House. He purposely refrained from participating in the pomp and circumstance at the university he had fled for first a governorship and then a national presidency. In contrast, President William Howard Taft trundled to Princeton to deliver a tribute to a predecessor of his in office. The other onetime commander in chief honored was the late Grover Cleveland, after whom the college’s Memorial Tower was named. As the Philadelphia Orchestra played “The Star-Spangled Banner,” [the elder of the dead president’s two sons](#) yanked on a halyard to [unfurl Old Glory](#) atop the tower. Cleveland Memorial Tower acquired [iconic status](#) with alacrity.



Meanwhile, Harvard University eschewed new construction in collegiate Gothic. Going further, it even committed to a policy of good riddance by [abolishing the presence of earlier forms](#). The style was expunged from Harvard, just as Yale, Princeton, and other institutions took oaths of fealty to the fashion. This bifurcation of architecture happened during the first quarter of the twentieth century, when wealthy donors consigned the means for concerted building campaigns unrivaled before or after. Many Gothicizing colleges and universities would not waver in their pledges for decades to come.

The exception at Harvard University that proves the rule is to be found in the Divinity School. The granite of Andover Hall (see Fig. 5.40), built in Gothic revival, sits [well removed geographically](#) from the bosom of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. So far so good. But consider a fact of vital importance that is betokened by the very name of the edifice: when the structure was commissioned, it was the project of a non-Harvardian institution, the Andover Theological Seminary, which [formed an alliance with Harvard Divinity School](#) in 1908.

Under Harvard, the premises of Andover gradually acquired the cladding of vegetation that bespoke the Ivy League (see Figs. 5.41 and 5.42). The tower is not particularly towering, but it suffices to evoke one made of ivory. That Gothic ambivalence about the surrounding world is part of what drove Harvard to clean house architecturally. It first rid itself of most constructions in the medievalizing manner and soon administered modernism as a disinfectant.

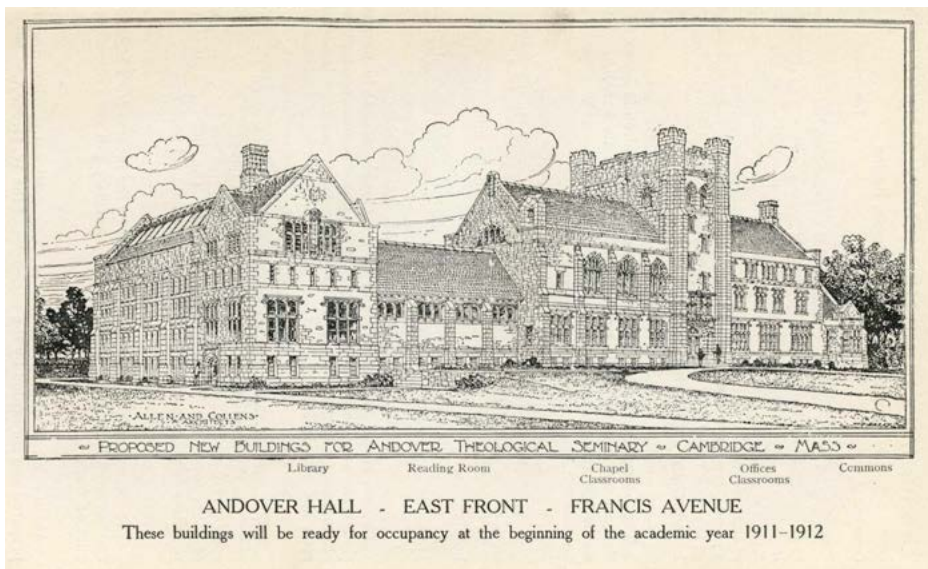


Fig. 5.40 Design plan for Andover Hall. Architectural sketch by Allen & Collens, ca. 1903. Published in Edwin M. Bacon, *A Boston Guide Book* (Boston: The Athenaeum Press, Ginn & Co., 1910).

073283 ANDOVER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, CAMBRIDGE, MASS.



Fig. 5.41 Postcard depicting Andover Hall, Harvard Divinity School, Cambridge, MA (Detroit, MI: Detroit Publishing Co., early twentieth century).

ANDOVER HALL, HARVARD DIVINITY SCHOOL, CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

2177



Fig. 5.42 Postcard depicting Andover Hall, Harvard Divinity School, Cambridge, MA (Boston: American Art Postcard Co., early twentieth century).

The great old educational institution on the Charles River is not (despite occasional misimpressions on the part of both it and other entities) the whole of Massachusetts. Outside its best-known university, the state has its fair share of campuses that bear a deep Gothic brand (see Fig. 5.43). For example, at Boston College in Chestnut Hill (see Fig. 5.44) [Gasson Hall and its tower](#) not only inspired most of the other nearby buildings on campus, but also influenced more broadly the development of the collegiate style throughout the United States once their design was published in 1909 (see Figs. 5.45 and 5.46). Praised by no less than Cram, it provided an outsized yardstick against which to take the measure of [other tall structures](#).

The collegiate Gothic tower calls to mind the cathedrals when they were white—and the allusion here to Le Corbusier is deliberate. Along with the entrance arch, the spire is often a sentinel that announces a campus to be a campus. It constitutes an intellectual and even spiritual alternative to the hectic materialism that has always lurked outside the stone quadrangles. Both the tower and the university can be a haven, locus of escape or fantasy, venue of resistance, protected area for meditation, pyramid of learning, incubator of epoch-making ideas, and much else. They may be caricatured as isolationist, but by the same token they may be extolled for offering a truce, time-out, or time to cogitate. After all, institutions of higher learning fulfill conflicting roles. On the one hand, they grease the wheels that must turn if future workers and money-makers are to be trained. At the same time, even if they have become less churchlike entities than was once the case, they remain establishments that stand at least somewhat apart from society. More to the point, if America has any ivory towers at all, many of them are in fact collegiate Gothic. So as not to become irrelevant, they call out for renovation and innovation. To meet the demands and demographics of a constantly changing world, they must be remodeled. Yet such refashioning requires judicious safeguarding: institutions of higher learning exist for and thanks to historic preservation. The towers were bequeathed to us, an instant Middle Ages for a country that had none. They were medievaesque because at the end of the day universities were medieval creations. More importantly, they were presented to their faculties, students, and alumni, and to the nation to be hotbeds of thought: they were think tanks before the concept was framed by that word. They were given to endure, for us to use as we see fit. Their positive impact has been measureless. Let us make the most of them, both towers and Middle Ages.

Within college contexts, the ivory tower *was* a Gothic tower. If the collegiate Gothicists had tunnel vision, [the tube was not horizontal but vertical](#). The United States was booming, with much of its most impressive urban growth taking place upward. For very different reasons, two of the most distinctive creations of America, the college campus and the urban skyscraper, both emerged from deep dialogue with Gothic.





Fig. 5.43 Postcard depicting Boston College, Chestnut Hill, MA  
(Boston: American Art Postcard Co., early twentieth century).

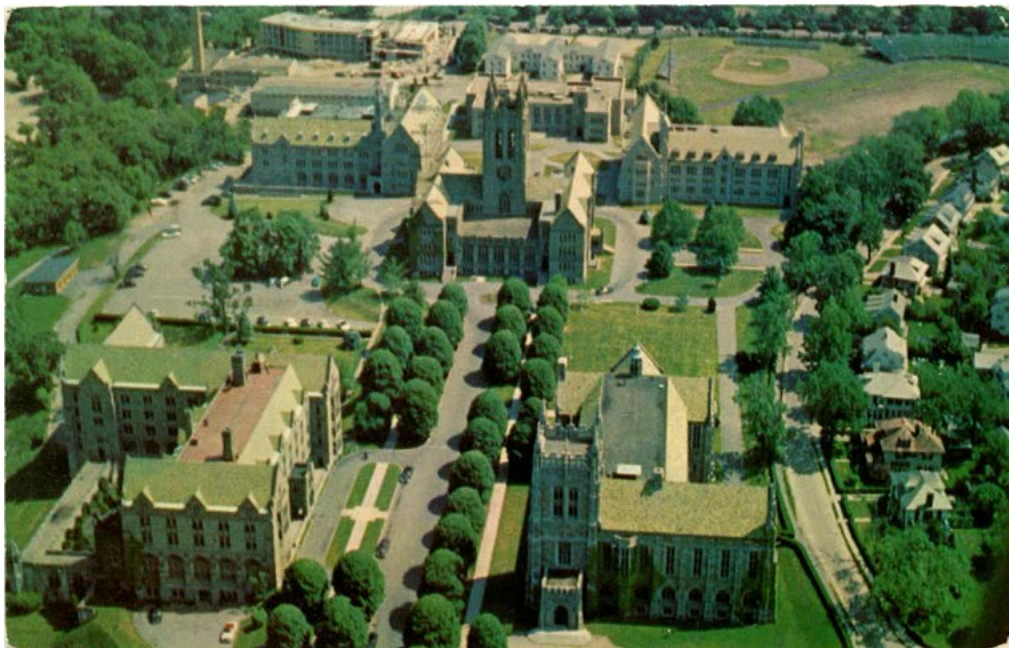


Fig. 5.44 Postcard depicting Boston College, Chestnut Hill, MA  
(Boston: Tichnor Bros., ca. 1959).



Fig. 5.45 Postcard depicting Boston College, Chestnut Hill, MA  
(Boston: Colourpicture, early twentieth century).



Fig. 5.46 Postcard depicting Boston College, Chestnut Hill, MA  
(Boston: Tichnor Bros., early twentieth century).



The medievalizing architecture shared by many American college towns and cities helped to make the United States hospitable for the jongleur from the Middle Ages. The Gothicization of construction happened just as the medieval minstrel took by quiet storm the nation at the forefront of most of the convulsive changes that were changing the whole world. The juggler blends in well within the university, since both the character and the institution dance on the razor's edge between rigor and recreation. The architectural style and the fictitious figure (if he was indeed made-up or imagined rather than real) were not rearguard actions to stave off modernity and modernism. Rather, the first pair were indispensable counterweights to the second. Respecting and even loving olden times does not necessarily signal fatuous self-indulgence. Quite the opposite case could be made. To be disenfranchised of a past that may stimulate optimism runs a close second to being denied a future of hope.

## 6. Point Taken: Gothic Modernism and the Modern Middle Ages

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The true Romanticist welcomes steel or concrete construction as his brother of the twelfth century must have welcomed the counterthrusting arch or flying buttress. To this extent, he may be called a 'Gothicist,' even though his "*ave*" to the steel frame and reinforced girder is, to a certain extent, a "*vale*" to the pointed arch and pinnacle.

—Bertram G. Goodhue,  
"The Romanticist Point of View"

### The Origins of Gothic Skyscrapers: Top That

The Gothic style was the crowning achievement of Christian architecture during the Middle Ages. Characterized by the pointed arch and an elaborate structural system of ribbed vaults and buttresses, it is a brilliant and impassioned style in which complex volumes of space are enclosed within a cage of stone and glass, all of it held aloft by the delicate opposition of thrust and counterthrust.

—William H. Pierson Jr.,  
*American Buildings and Their Architects*

Towers in collegiate Gothic style were tours de force in multiple senses. In a time of no-hold-barred zeal, they put a spire into the heart of American aspiration. They shot heavenward at the same time as skyscrapers rebalanced the skylines of cities across the country. For most of the twentieth century, the United States outbuilt the world

in these soaring buildings. No less an authority than Montgomery Schuyler (see Fig. 6.1), cultural critic par excellence of the Gilded Age, commented on the trend that propelled millionaire moguls to make menhirs of steel and glass. To his mind, the modern-day megaliths harked back not to prehistory or pyramids but to the Middle Ages. The new steeples had “no parallel, but a striking prototype” in the cathedrals built in northern France in the early thirteenth century.



Fig. 6.1 Montgomery Schuyler, age 60. Photograph, 1903.  
Photographer unknown.

The reason for relating many-storied buildings to Gothic great churches on a purely structural level is as transparent as glass set into stone or steelwork can be. Tall structures, such as the greatest Egyptian monumental piles and obelisks, existed in antiquity, yet were laid out differently. Most ancient constructions *extended horizontally*. In contradistinction to the classical low-rise, the Gothic cathedral constitutes the antecedent of the upwardly striving high-rise. Thus, the architects who thought of erecting skyscrapers could not help but look closely at the *techniques of great churches* in the late Middle Ages. Like the constructors of cathedrals, they sought to develop techniques for achieving the most ambitious structural height. Like them, they endeavored simultaneously to maintain stability without sacrificing fenestration and space to the size and extent of the support system.

The words “arch” and “architecture” are etymologically unrelated, but in the early development of skyscrapers they had more in common than they have had ever since. The men who raised the modern tall buildings studied Gothic for guidance as they sought clear solutions to a primal challenge: how to gird the maximum of space within the minimum of materials. In medieval Gothic, the chief ingredients are hewn stone and glass. In modern architecture, the equivalents are steel and glass. Gothic was the

design and construction [style of choice for verticality](#) until the twentieth century, and for this and other reasons, a recurrent strand in modernism views Gothic as harbingering [the quintessence of the modern](#).

Consciously or not, New World architects acceded to the same impulse as had been on show in the Oxford University Museum of Natural History, which was begun in 1855 and opened in 1860 (see Fig. 6.2). Sir Richard Owen, founder of the institution, intended it in its Gothicity as a “cathedral to nature.” Under the sway of John Ruskin and his *The Stones of Venice*, the [principal designers](#) of the English structure chose a [polychromatic Gothic](#) with Italianate and Venetian coloring. When [one of the two lead participants](#) in the planning fell ill, the edifice was brought to completion with the great man’s direct involvement. The exterior of the museum is Ruskinian from top to bottom. Yet it stands as anything but a monument to a conservative, historicizing Gothic. On the contrary, the design team innovated by erecting a Gothic framework of iron and glass, materials most familiar at the time from railroads and conservatories. Inside a large square court, they planted a glass roof atop cast iron pillars.

The same building blocks had been applied to impressive effect in the Crystal Palace. This establishment, erected in 1851 in London, constituted the centerpiece of the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations, with which world’s fairs originated. The resultant style of the institution has been labeled “[techno-Gothic](#).” Architects of New York City, Chicago, Pittsburgh, and other cities in the United States noticed—and took aspects of the Oxford experiment to the next level, both really and figuratively.



THE UNIVERSITY MUSEUM.  
The University Museum, in the Parks, is sometimes called the “New Museum,” to distinguish it from the Old or Ashmolean Museum. The first stone was laid in 1855, and the building opened in 1860. The Museum was intended for the promotion of the study of Natural Science, and was erected at the charge of the University. In 1873 an additional wing was added by the Charendon Trustees, containing the lecture-rooms and laboratories of the department of Experimental Philosophy. Besides work-rooms, laboratories, and a dancing-room, there are provided abundant specimens. Under the roof of the Museum is the Scientific Library and Reading-room. Hitherto the treasures of the Bodleian Library have permitted the books on Natural Science to be transferred. The Library in the Museum is now properly the Bodleian Library.

Fig. 6.2 The Oxford Museum of Natural History. Photograph with hand-drawn human figures superimposed, ca. 1890–1900. Photography by André & Sleigh.

Assembled of cast iron and plate glass, [Crystal Palace](#) was erected for the first few years of its life in London's Hyde Park (see Fig. 6.3). Despite being profoundly new in its materials, the Palace managed to be at once lightly evocative of [High Victorian Gothic](#), and ultimately prejudicial to it. It anticipated horizontally many features that would become fixtures of skyscrapers vertically. Although essentially an extravagantly oversized hothouse or a huge greenhouse, Crystal Palace also had ecclesiastical aspects in its basic layout. Hence, it has been called a cathedral of both human progress and commerce. As one chapel in this great church, it featured a "[Mediaeval Court](#)" (see Figs. 6.4 and 6.5), which presented an extraordinarily influential display of Gothic, overseen by none other than Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin himself. In consolidating iron and glass (even if not to achieve uprightness), it offered inspiration for modern architecture to come. Yet in what it contained, a much earlier era took precedence.

The indefatigable designer of the Palace of Westminster managed to make the Middle Ages subjugate modernity by demonstrating that pseudomedieval art and artisanry could be applied to all the needs of the present day. The medieval formed a counterpoint, not a contradiction, to other arrays of the latest machinery. It also complemented the exoticism of exhibits that flaunted the wares and ways of life from unfamiliar cultures from the world over. The making of the Middle Ages into a chic commodity within this context of protoglobalization can be inferred from the names of the vendors from whom objects on show or ones like them could be purchased (see Fig. 6.6). A roll call of hot or would-be hot brand names leaps out at the highest register, just below the glass-and-iron ceiling. One and a half centuries would pass before the catchword "[cathedrals of consumption](#)" would become entrenched for describing large indoor shopping spaces such as malls, but the consumptive process was initiated already in 1851.



Fig. 6.3 Postcard depicting the Crystal Palace, London (Dundee, UK: Valentine's Co., early twentieth century).





Fig. 6.4 The “Medieval Court” at the Great Exhibition of 1851, arranged by Augustus Welby Pugin. Lithograph by Dickinson Brothers, 1854. London, Victoria and Albert Museum. Image courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. All rights reserved.



Fig. 6.5 Postcard depicting the Crystal Palace Medieval Court (ca. 1902).



Fig. 6.6 Crystal Palace Medieval Court. Etching, 1851. Artist unknown. Published in *The Illustrated London News*, September 20, 1851, 361.

More than sixty years after the construction of Crystal Palace and the Oxford University Museum of Natural History, the prismatic dome structure of the [Glass Pavilion](#) was fitted together from [concrete and glass](#) in Cologne (see Fig. 6.7). The occasion was the 1914 exhibition of the [German Association of Craftsmen](#), who could be called the inheritors in that nation of the British Arts and Crafts movement. With its unusual geometry and variegated coloring, the design manifested a concern with light and aesthetic effect. It bears remembering that the Gothic and neo-Gothic cathedral in Cologne was a point of national pride—and that it had been completed considerably less than a half century earlier. From a perspective of German nationalism, Gothic was indeed the [precursor to modernism](#).



Fig. 6.7 “The Gothic cathedral is the prelude to glass architecture.” Design of the Glashaus-Pavillon. Rendering by Bruno Taut, 1914. Berlin, Akademie der Künste, Archiv der Akademie, Sammlung Baukunst.

Owing to the outbreak of World War I, the Glass Pavilion was dismantled after being open to the public for view and visitation for less than three months. The skyscrapers that changed the face of transoceanic cities became the exclusive province of the United States. Even so, they shared with the sadly impermanent structure a knowing and unhidden debt to Gothic. The pavilion was a first toe dunked into the puddle of the modernism in architecture that would soon be under design and development in Germany. An art school and movement named [Bauhaus](#) had the upper hand from 1919 to 1933. If Gothic had its polar opposite, this style might seem to have been it. Whereas the medieval form was old and historicizing, this school of design was self-knowingly modern and seemingly ahistorical. Yet the two manners were not altogether opposed. Notably, both exploited the extraordinary qualities of glass as a construction material. An early theorist of Bauhaus, Arthur Korn, waxed ecstatic in [extolling medieval](#)

stained-glass windows for their beauty. As he saw matters, the new fashion paired glass with other materials to fulfill new functions: “A new glass age has begun, which is equal in beauty to the old one of Gothic windows.”

The distinctively US iteration of the earlier medieval Gothic was sufficiently widespread as an architectural idiom that traces of it, and sometimes much more, can be detected dozens of stories aloft in cities such as New York, Chicago, and Pittsburgh. For a time, Gothic became as American as apple pie: people ate it up—and here that means emphatically up. Collegiate Gothic sought to infix the architecture in its historical, social, and spiritual context. The soaring physical height enabled an expectancy of moral uplift. In contrast, Gothic skyscrapers brought to a logical fruition the analysis of the medieval style sheerly for its design principles. Wherever steel stretched skyward, architects and viewers turned their talents to the upward mobility and spirituality of Gothic cathedrals. The way skyward had been paved, perhaps unforeseen, by earlier public works. For example, at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, the North American continent became thickly freckled with municipalities that were the proud possessors of standpipes, water towers, and pumping stations in, however improbably, the renascent Gothic. These structures, designed with lancets, quatrefoils, and other pointed and lobed staples of revival architecture, towered over the landscape (see Figs. 6.8, 6.9 and 6.10). Sometimes they stood in towns with other buildings in the same style, but in others they were specimens of what could be called Gothic tokenism. They could have been eyesores, like the smokestacks and slag heaps that came as the inevitable concomitants of industrialization. Instead, rather than being masked as industrial intrusions, they were exhibited as objects of civic pride. Beyond looking like hydraulic monuments of bygone civilizations, they at least aspired to be picturesque. At the same time, by being built in Gothic they may have been intended to have rub off on them some of the soulfulness associated with the style. Buildings were on the verge of being made machines. Gothic skyscrapers fought the mechanization: they embodied architecture as real or at least pseudo-anti-machine.

Churches and other religious institutions sought to copy medieval cathedrals, but in so doing both to Americanize and Gothicize the features of these buildings. Not infrequently, the houses of worship in the United States included replicas of European pilgrimage sites, most notably ones in the modern boomtown of Lourdes. The Gothic cladding of municipal waterwork facilities fulfilled similar functions within laical life. Decades would elapse before the creation of Disneyland or Walt Disney World, and public works cannot be compared closely with theme parks. Even so, it may be said that these much earlier edifices served similarly as at least local destinations for recreation. As happened so often in the revival, they were set in built landscapes that were designed to appear sylvan. What is more, the aquatic associations only enhanced their picturesqueness. However great a contradiction in terms the phrase may be, they acted in their sometimes moated majesty as industrial ivory towers (see Figs. 6.11 and 6.12). Gothic architecture and idyllic landscapes have often been wedded.





Fig. 6.8 Postcard depicting the Old Water Tower and Palmolive Building, Chicago, IL (Chicago: Aero Distributing Co., early twentieth century).



Fig. 6.9 Postcard depicting the Stand Pipe, Fremont, OH (Boston: Metropolitan News and Publishing Co., early twentieth century).

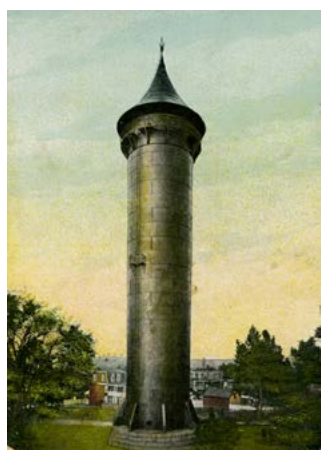


Fig. 6.10 Postcard depicting the Stand Pipe, Lancaster, PA (Lancaster, PA: I. Steinfeldt, early twentieth century).



Fig. 6.11 Postcard depicting the Water Tower and Park, Milwaukee, WI (ca. 1905).



Fig. 6.12 Postcard depicting the lake at Gladwin Park, Detroit, MI  
(Detroit, MI: Wolverine News Co., ca. 1911).

In the United States, the most magnificent example of an engineering triumph presented in Gothic revival style is the Brooklyn Bridge. Erected from 1869 to 1883 in New York, the construction was radically innovative in its mechanics. A supreme feat of the gigantism that expressed the vitality of America at the time, it is held aloft by a suspension system that relies for its lightness upon the paradox of heavy steel cables. Yet in its architecture, the same structure turned back to earlier history in a characteristically nineteenth-century way. The thick metal ropes that suspend the road across the river rest upon two massive pylons of granite block, pierced by lancets in a style well known to us: Gothic.

In height, the steeples of the Brooklyn Bridge were overtopped in New York City at the time only by the spire of Trinity Church, which was built under the influence of Pugin (see Fig. 6.13). At this juncture, Trinity and its Puginian Gothic revival style would have been stunningly new, but within a few decades the skyline of the city would be altered irrevocably (see Fig. 6.14). The historicizing aspect of the towers on the span came from their design, since each incorporated two lofty lancets (see Fig. 6.15). Beneath these medievaesque points of more than a hundred feet proceed convoys of vehicles and troops of pedestrians alike. Like medieval churchgoers, they pass through the portals of their places of worship—and light penetrates the same spaces, as if through arches in ruined choirs where the stained glass is no more.





Fig. 6.13 Postcard depicting Trinity Church, New York, NY (New York: Lunitone Photo Print, early twentieth century).



Fig. 6.14 Postcard depicting Wall Street and Trinity Church, New York, NY (early twentieth century).



Fig. 6.15 Postcard depicting the Brooklyn Bridge, New York, NY (New York: Manhattan Post Card Co., early twentieth century).

Despite the sharp tips of the archways, no one could have misconstrued the bridge by itself for an authentic structure from the Middle Ages. Confusion was even less likely in its urban context. In fact, even the Gothicizing touches could be overlooked as the metallurgical modernity of steel catches the viewer's eye. Contrast the Tower Bridge over the River Thames in London, which was raised up [slightly later](#). It holds fast to a Victorian Gothic style that can seem completely unsuited to the technology it houses (see Fig. 6.16). Yet early postcards situate it in juxtaposition to such genuinely medieval landmarks as the Tower of London. Today, the faux medievalness may delude tourists (tower-ists) into thinking that the span has a real connection with the Middle Ages (see Fig. 6.17). Whether European or not, we forget at our peril how what appears medieval at first glance may contain much that is modern—and vice versa.



Fig. 6.16 Postcard depicting Tower Bridge, London (Dundee, UK: Valentine's Co., early twentieth century).



Fig. 6.17 Postcard depicting the Tower of London and London Bridge, London (Dundee, UK: Valentine's Co., early twentieth century).

By physics and nature, the Gothic arch points heavenward. By its directionality, this kind of erection is therefore associated almost lackadaisically with spiritual transcendence. Nothing should be puzzling in the association that many have drawn between the story of the jongleur and the architecture of Gothic. A soulful connection with the style existed from the very beginning of the skyscraper, that great American innovation. The Frenchman Viollet-le-Duc, whose *Lectures* were published in an English translation in 1881, had not gone so far as to propose the construction of office buildings with iron frames encased in stone, let alone of Gothic skyscrapers. Still, he had [laid out the basis](#) for such an extension of his ideas. In Chicago, his influence, for his focus on cathedrals as technical miracles among other things, had been [recognized by 1880](#).

What was the first skyscraper? One very early candidate for the prize of being the prototype is the Jayne Building in Philadelphia (see Fig. 6.18), which was [finished in 1851](#). For the record, that was the same year as the Great Exhibition and the Crystal Palace in London. The ur-skyscraper stood ten stories high, with granite piers that ran from the first floor to the top. The Gothic character of the edifice evidenced itself near the top, where the supports joined in lancets topped by quatrefoils. Despite potentially being compatible with the design of tall structures, the style in fact featured little in them until a few decades later.



Fig. 6.18 Jayne Building, Philadelphia, PA. Photograph by Leonard Overturf, 1951.  
Washington, DC, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

The Home Insurance Building in Chicago, constructed between 1883 and 1885, is sometimes held to deserve credit more properly as the first skyscraper in the world. Originally nine stories, supplemented by an additional two in 1890, it was composed mainly of iron but included steel in its framework. It showed the architectural promise, hollow literally but not metaphorically, in the strategy of employing walls as screens rather than as supports. The designer was William Le Baron Jenney. In some circles he was called consequently by the stiffly contested title “Father of the American skyscraper.” After beginning his education in the United States, he rounded off his studies in Paris, where he was a classmate of Gustave Eiffel and fell under the spell of Viollet-le-Duc. Back in America during the Civil War, he served as an engineer under Union General Sherman, uncle of the Elizabeth Cameron with whom Henry Adams was entwisted for half his life. While in service, Jenney rose to the rank of major. He collaborated with an architect on a volume entitled *Principles and Practice of Architecture*, of which an investigation of the Gothic cathedral forms the backbone. The motivation of the coauthors for finding relevance in this architecture is readily discernible, since architects and builders had within their grasp the attainment of unprecedented height—if only they could first master the basics of medieval skeleton construction and then express them through the media of iron and steel.

To Ralph Adams Cram and others like him, the amalgamation of metal and stone crossed wholly over the line. To such dyed-in-the-wool or even stone-cold Goths, skyscraper and Gothic were antonyms. These architects were not the equivalents in their profession of plastic surgeons, out to achieve cosmetic effects by performing bizarre face-lifts that would make modern buildings look older from the neck up. Nor were practicing designers the only ones to venture their opinions. Henry Adams’s youngest brother did not keep close to his vest that he found the juxtaposition of materials and styles from such different eras repugnant. In *The Law of Civilization and Decay* (1896), Brooks Adams explicated the course of history, such as the downfall of Rome, on the basis of the latest theories about thermodynamics. On a less high-flown level, he now and again opined upon architecture. One of his ideas restated the ancient commonplace about historical inevitability in which golden ages yielded to silver, silver to iron. He suggested a paradox involving precious and base metals. His premise was that the adoption of the gold standard in 1873 opened a door to monopolization and manipulation of capital by an elite. (Some things never change, do they?) In short order, this development led to the application of iron and steel to skyscrapers, embodying the new Iron Age that compared ever so poorly with the Golden Age of medieval art.

Such somber thoughts of decline were one aspect, though only one, of the fin de siècle. Among others were escalating optimism and confidence of a sort that would soon powerfully mark the skylines of major American cities. The insignia included Gothic.



## The Cathedral of Commerce

The cathedrals were the skyscrapers  
of their day.

—Donald L. Miller, *City of the Century*

The foremost example of an early Gothic skyscraper may be the sixty-story **Woolworth Building** in Manhattan (see Fig. 6.19). For close on twenty years, from when polished off in 1913 at 792 feet until outdone by the Empire State Building in 1931, it ranked as the **tallest inhabited edifice in the world**. It was occupied by 12,000 people and 3,000 offices, and outfitted with more than 5,000 windows. “Its summit piercing the heavens,” it was exceeded in height only by the Eiffel Tower—and the Parisian icon was unoccupied. The pinnacle stood alone, recognizable from all four sides as a new sort of construction in the rapidly evolving urban landscape. To this day it remains among the twenty loftiest structures in New York City, among the fifty tallest in the entire United States. It followed on the much lower but equally impressive **West Street Building** in a similar Gothic idiom by the same architect (see Fig. 6.20).



Fig. 6.19 Postcard depicting the Woolworth Building, New York, NY  
(New York: Irving Underhill, early twentieth century).





Fig. 6.20 West Street Building, New York, NY. Photograph by Irving Underhill, 1907.

The Woolworth Building was soon nicknamed “the [Cathedral of Commerce](#).” The edifice is strongly and to our eyes perhaps strangely Gothic, with gargoyles galore. Its qualities as a cathedral and as a skyscraper are juxtaposed as a mixture rather than as a compound. The Gothicism takes a few different forms. Most readily visible from afar is the top: in the middle of turrets at all four corners, a spire juts upward. To a viewer who draws nearer, the next feature of the style to greet the eye is the decoration overlaid in a sheath of white. Gleaming terracotta clothes the steel frame that handles all the work of structural support. The observation gallery atop the building shows a profusion of chimeras that puts to shame Viollet-le-Duc’s recasting of Notre-Dame of Paris (see Fig. 6.21). Another photograph emphasizes the same sort of Gothic exuberance at the street-level entrance (see Fig. 6.22). In short, the exterior of the building features a riot of arches, buttresses, lancets, and pinnacles worthy of the liveliest late Gothic construction of the Middle Ages. It [recreated the architectural marvels](#) that parts of Europe had allowed to slip into ruin, monuments of ancient Greece and medieval France, pockmarked as much by the bellicosity of man as by the mere passage of erosive time. Nor do the medievalizing and Gothicism end at the portal. Visitors enter a lobby in the shape of a Latin cross, where they find Byzantinizing mosaics and stained glass, along with murals that depict allegorical scenes of business life (see Fig. 6.23). What more could a money-leeching modern-day monk desire?

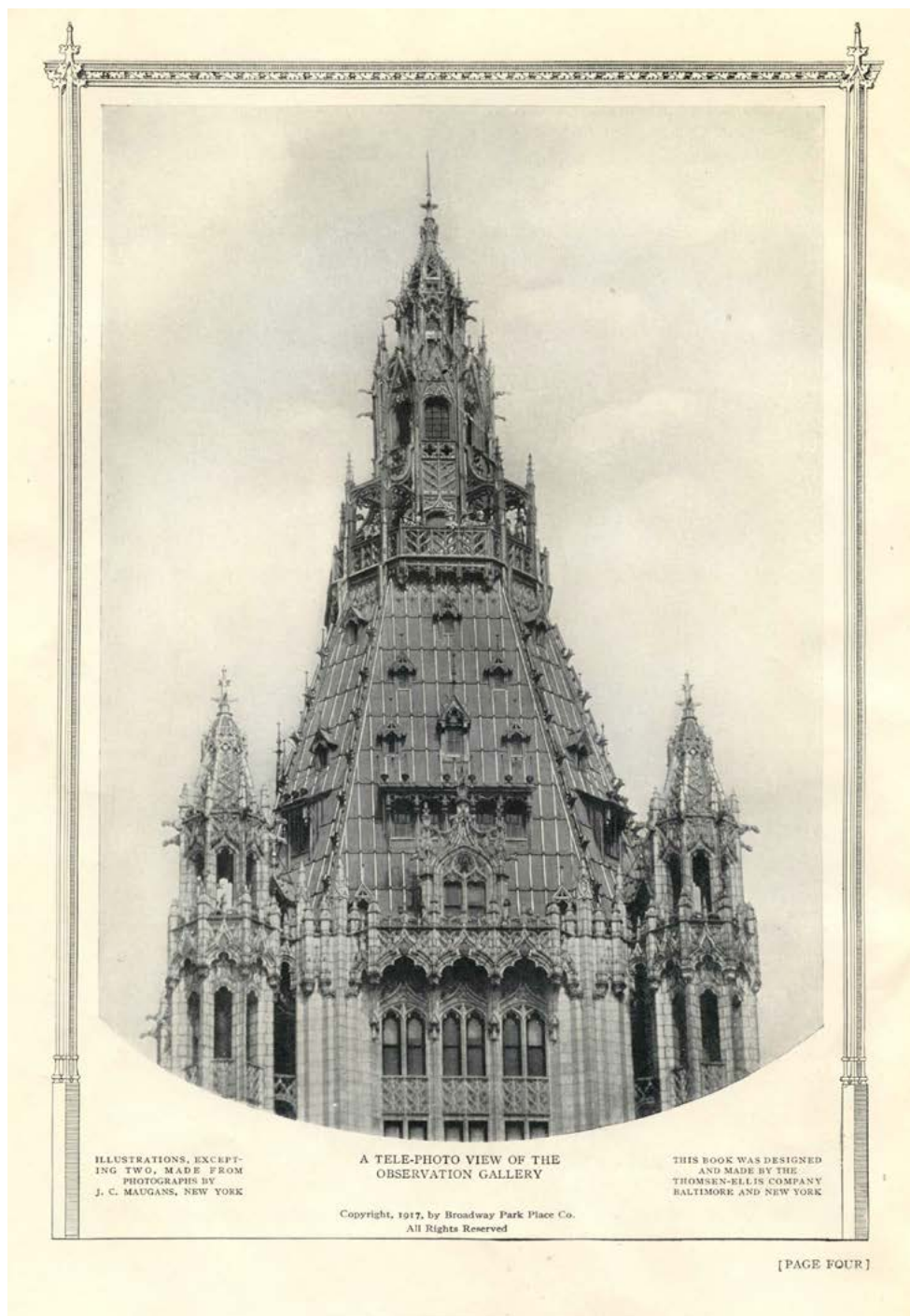


Fig. 6.21 Observation gallery of the Woolworth Building. Photograph by J. C. Maugans, 1917. Published in Edwin A. Cochran, *The Cathedral of Commerce: The Highest Building in the World* (New York: Broadway Park Place Co., 1918), <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/100570886>, 4.

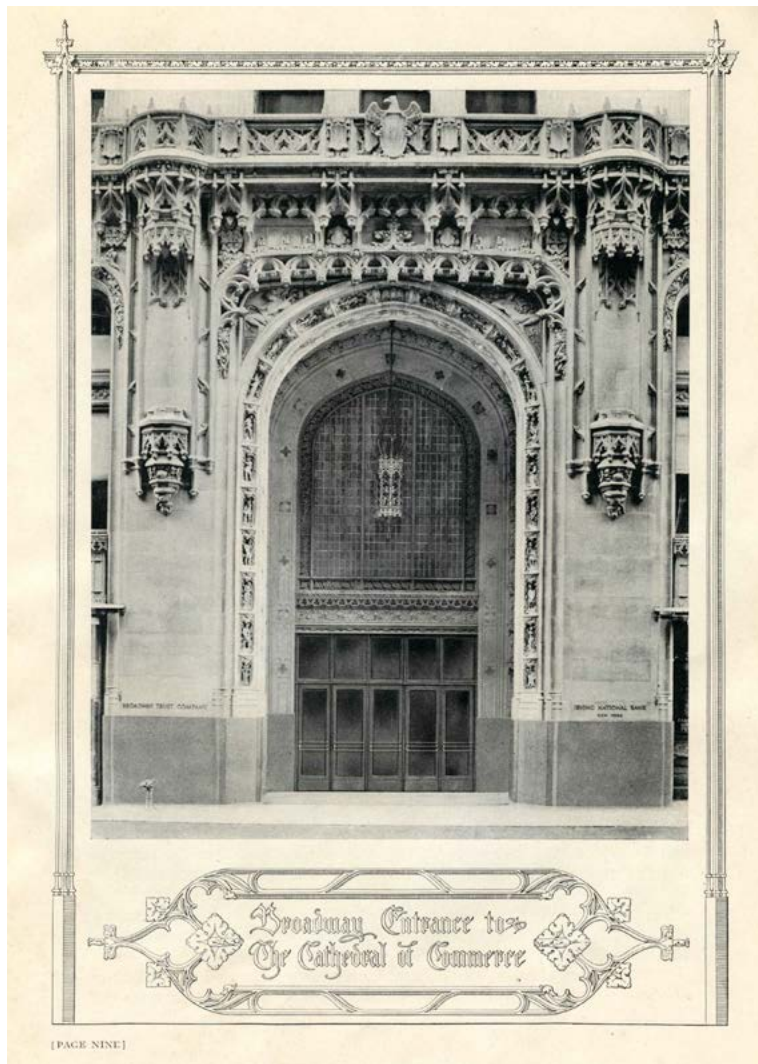


Fig. 6.22 Broadway entrance to the Woolworth Building. Photograph by J. C. Maugans, 1917. Published in Edwin A. Cochran, *The Cathedral of Commerce: The Highest Building in the World* (New York: Broadway Park Place Co., 1918), <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/100570886>, 9.

The byname of the Woolworth Building goes directly to the contradiction inherent within the Gothic skyscraper. While modern and commercial, it strives concurrently to be medieval and spiritual. A clergyman, not condemnatory but encomiastic, set up precisely this juxtaposition in his foreword to a [guidebook to the edifice](#). Yet in the concluding sentence of this passage, the good cleric suggests that the structure has little about it to warrant calling it a great church. In fact, earlier medievalizers, such as both John Ruskin and William Morris, would have been aghast at the Americanness of juxtaposing the concepts of cathedral and commerce in the first place.

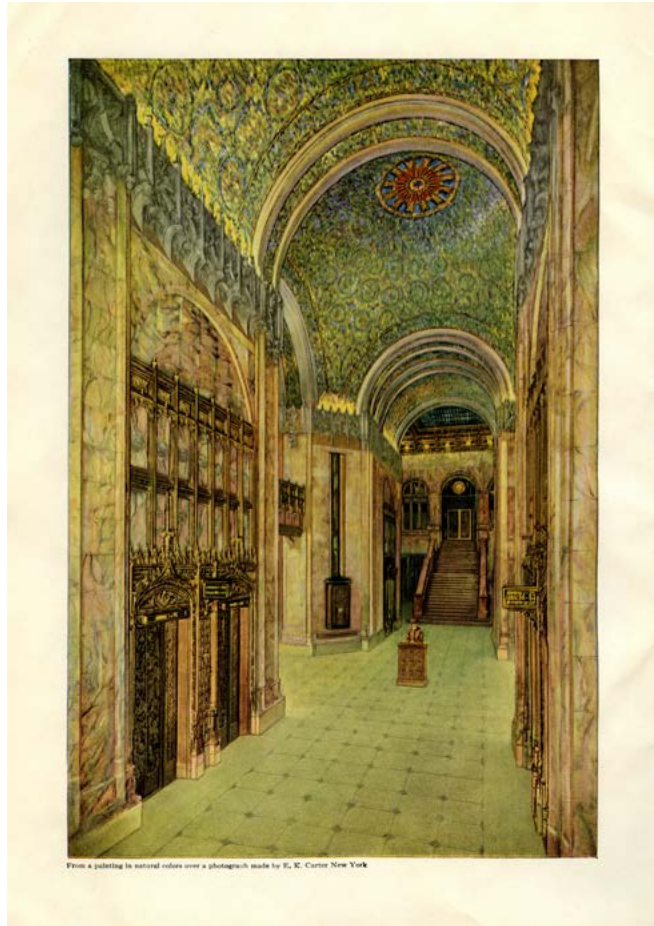


Fig. 6.23 Lobby of the Woolworth Building. Colorized photograph by E. K. Carter, ca. 1917. Published in Edwin A. Cochran, *The Cathedral of Commerce: The Highest Building in the World* (New York: Broadway Park Place Co., 1918), <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/100570886>, 2.

Woolworth heaped up a fortune from his vast chain of emporia. The brick-and-mortar outlets were known in those days as five-and-ten-cent stores. His ambition for the skyscraper may have been *inspired by his admiration* for Westminster Abbey and the Houses of Parliament in London as well as for the place of worship and pilgrimage in Cologne. Of the threesome, only the first is late medieval more than modern and medievaesque. Yet irrespective of the architectural inspirations for its patron, was the Cathedral of Commerce so much ecclesiastic as feudal or baronial? Unless we make room for an un-Christian tendency we could call “altar ego,” it has a stronger right to be regarded as a castle than as a house of God. Better yet, the Woolworth Building is a tower, a symbol of seigneurial power and wealth such as thrusts skyward in walled Tuscan hill towns of medieval Italy, like San Gimignano. If it is high, the height takes the form of “high risk, high return.”



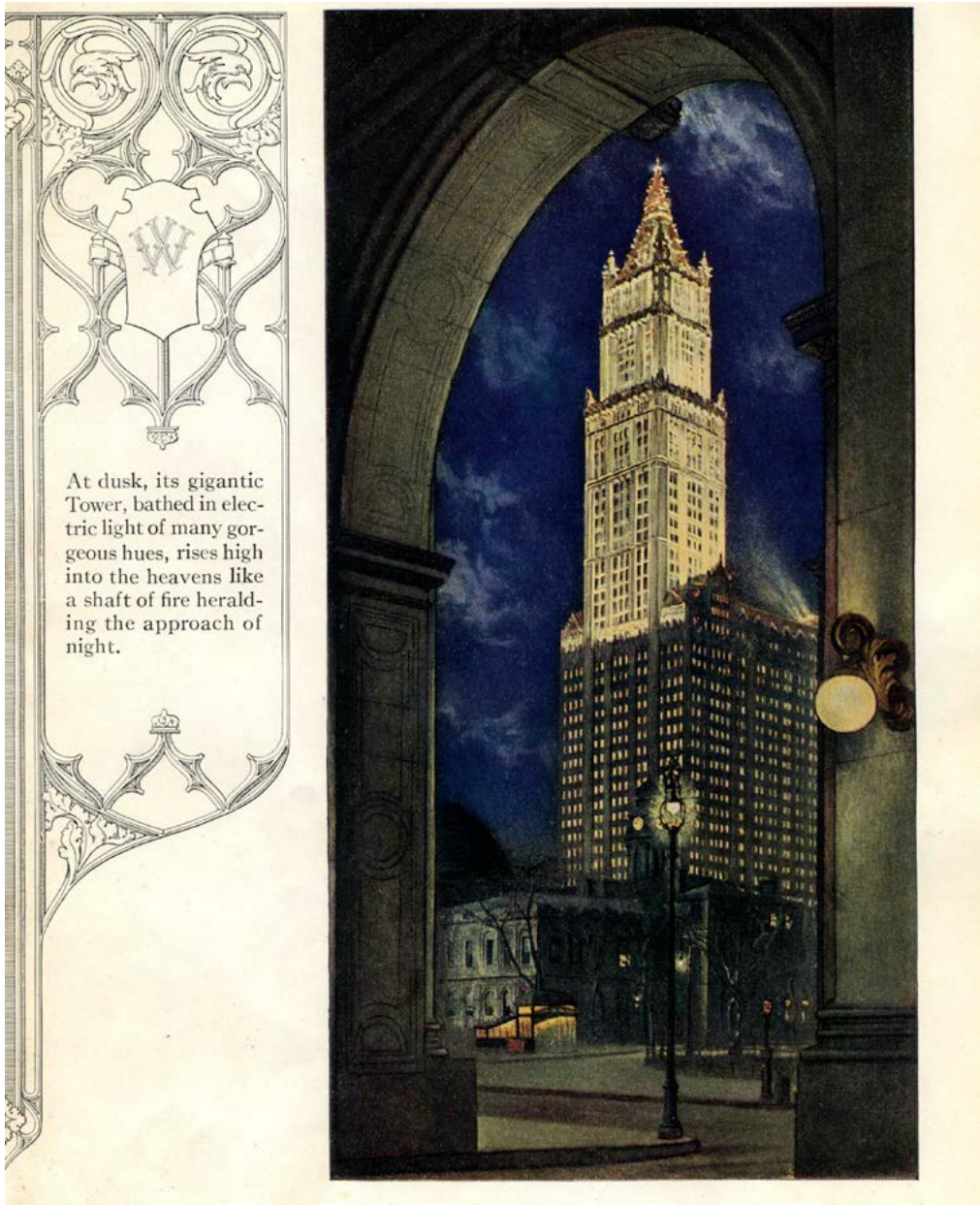


Fig. 6.24 Night-time illumination of the Woolworth Building. Illustration, ca. 1917. Artist unknown. Published in Edwin A. Cochran, *The Cathedral of Commerce: The Highest Building in the World* (New York: Broadway Park Place Co., 1918), <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/100570886>, 17.



At the same time, such buildings attempt to elide, by sheathing steel in stone, the disconnect Henry Adams felt keenly between the Virgin and the dynamo. Their exteriors are radically modernized equivalents to Chartres. At the same time, they are shells that camouflage machinery, such as the [vertical transportation](#) without which these buildings would have been beyond the bounds of possibility: having stairwells but no elevator shafts works only in structures with a handful of stories, which clarifies why higher walk-ups were made illegal in the first half of the twentieth century. For that matter, even from outside, the brilliant effects of these edifices required what was then the latest technology. A 1918 book guaranteeing that the Woolworth Building would be known even unto eternity as “The Cathedral of Commerce” commemorated in its opening sentence the formal inauguration of the skyscraper by using—ta-da!—[electrical illumination](#). A later plate that shows the tourist attraction by night bears the caption (see Fig. 6.24): “[At dusk, its gigantic Tower](#), bathed in electric light of many gorgeous hues, rises high into the heavens like a shaft of fire heralding the approach of night.” Not an ordinary nickel-and-dime cathedral!

## The Tribune Tower

One swallow does not a summer make.

Another relevant case among Gothic skyscrapers is the thirty-six-floor [Tribune Tower](#) in Chicago, completed in 1925 (see Fig. 6.25). Its design was selected in an international competition run by the [major city newspaper](#), for which the edifice is named. The goal was to celebrate the [seventy-fifth anniversary](#) of the year in which the paper had been instituted. In the end, John Mead Howells and [Raymond Hood](#) took the victory lap. In their partnership, these two New York architects were associated mostly with [Art Deco business centers](#), but for this tall building they favored neo-Gothic. The second place went to an entry by [Eliel Saarinen](#), destined for fame from his art nouveau constructions. The Finn’s submission for the design of the Trib building also featured pronounced Gothic aspects (see Fig. 6.26). The hoped-for outcome was a design for “the most beautiful and distinctive office building in the world.” The contest for the \$100,000 prize was open, but an article in the *Chicago Sunday Tribune* nudged readers none too subtly toward the Middle Ages. The headline posed to the broadsheet’s readers a supposedly open-ended question: “What do *you think* The Tribune’s new building will be like?” On the right side, most of the page was taken up by a large image made from an etching of the resplendently and unrelentingly Gothic west façade of Antwerp Cathedral (see Fig. 6.27). The soft-sell prose about the church presented it innocently as a [provocation to imagination](#). Yet on the left side, the short text was flanked by a fanciful office block. The structure was surmounted, rather unorganically, by an adaptation of the cathedral’s [largest spire](#). If the sponsors were fishing for Gothic, they used dynamite to do so.



Fig. 6.25 Postcard depicting Tribune Tower, Chicago, IL (Chicago: Max Rigot Selling Co., early twentieth century).



Fig. 6.26 Eliel Saarinen's proposed design for Tribune Tower, Chicago, IL. Rendering by Eliel Saarinen, 1922.

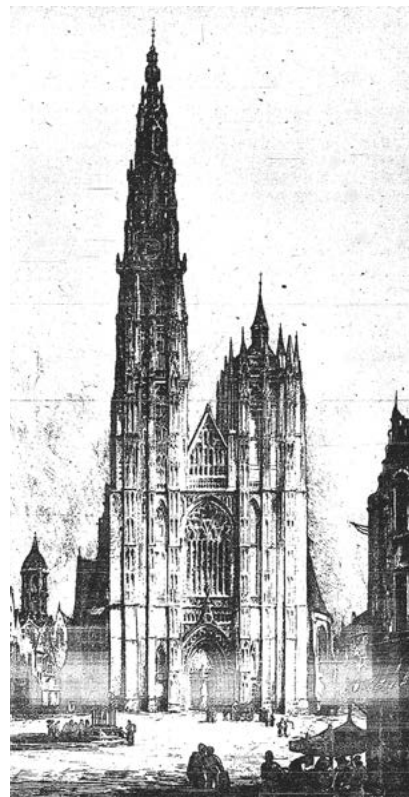


Fig. 6.27 The Cathedral of Antwerp. Etching by Arthur Ackermann & Son, Inc., 1922. Published in *The Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 20, 1922.

Both the origins and aspirations of the neo-Gothic style ultimately chosen for the Tribune Tower were proclaimed in the [Hall of Inscriptions](#) in the lobby. A [quotation](#) from John Ruskin's "Lamp of Memory" in *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, with all the flourishes of a blackletter font, is inset in the floor (see Fig. 6.28). The same spirit drove the contractors to embed upon the surface of the construction what now amounts to 149 rocks from man-made structures and natural sites all around the world—and from across time. The chronological and geographical reach of the pieces is very deliberate. To the makers of the skyscraper, building techniques were positioning modern America to outgun the achievements of the past—to eclipse with steel in the New World what the Old had accomplished with stone.

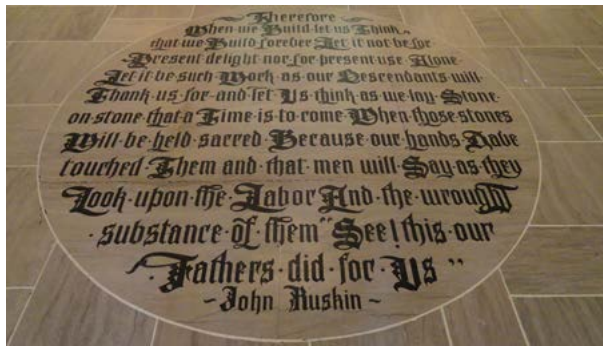


Fig. 6.28 A quotation from John Ruskin's "Lamp of Memory" in *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, inset in the "Hall of Inscriptions," Tribune Tower, Chicago, IL. Floor inlay by Howells & Hood, ca. 1923–1925. Photograph, ca. 2014. Photographer unknown.

A ferrous baton had been passed from one continent to another with the Statue of Liberty. As we saw, the copper-clad image had an iron-framed interior designed by Viollet-le-Duc, the architect who more than any other in France rejuvenated Gothic. The steel groundwork (and skywork) had been raised with the Eiffel Tower, itself a rival or foil of the first magnitude to the renovated Notre-Dame of Paris. Now the United States had jointed the two together, steel and stone, modern and medieval, in the Gothic skyscraper. Those wide awake to what might be called the riveting successes of architectural history judged the move to a fresh expression of the style from the Middle Ages as not backward and downward but forward and upward, as [not old but new](#).

The distinctive architectural features of the Tribune Building extend to ornate buttresses at the very peak. As a whole, the misplaced steeple is modeled after the medieval Butter Tower of Rouen Cathedral in France—and after Harkness Tower at Yale University, which was [singled out](#) for its beauty in a promotion of the competition for the architectural design of the Chicago edifice (see Fig. 6.29). The indebtedness to the towers of great churches in Rouen, [Amiens](#) (see Fig. 6.30), and [Mechlin](#) (see Fig. 6.31) in France and Flanders, and its likeness to Harkness in Connecticut, may have carried a

special emotional and cultural charge for the [first cousins](#) who were the driving forces behind the Chicago daily newspaper and its contest. Both men were graduates of Yale and were exposed in their military service during World War I to the damage done to medieval towns that were shelled during the combat. Their boola boola strain of American Gothic could save the day architecturally by preserving the Middle Ages for posterity, much as the doughboys had done in the war.

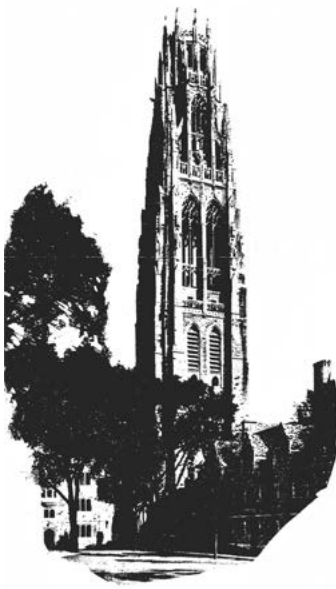


Fig. 6.29 Harkness Memorial, Yale University, New Haven, CT. Photograph, 1922. Published in *The Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 20, 1922.



Fig. 6.30 Amiens Cathedral, Amiens. Photograph by W. A. Mansell & Co., 1924.

Beyond absorbing rafts of contemporary sculpture in newly sculpted chimeras and gargoyles, the Tribune Tower repurposes, in a very American expression of the “melting pot,” stones, bricks, and other [pieces from different architectural and natural sites](#) throughout the world. But the Chicago skyscraper was believed to embody much more than a magpie-like gathering of choice morsels from previous or foreign cultures. The design elements were selected with care to be the best and most beautiful, and the carvings and stonework reflected this process of selection. The scope of ambition was greater too: the structure is studded with bits and pieces not just from around the planet but even from beyond it. It includes, among later additions to the original souvenirs, a nugget of moon rock, as does also a pane of stained glass in the National Cathedral. The lunar lumps go to show that Gothic revival can be both forward- and outward-looking.





Fig. 6.31 Cathedral of Mechlin. Steel engraving by J. J. Crew after painting by L. J. Wood, 1879.

The chair of the jury that chose the Howells and Hood design as the winner felt that the entry stood out because its distinctive appearance countered the most atrocious imperfection in the general state of culture in America—and more narrowly in Chicago: the Gothic design embodied medieval spirituality as an [antidote to modern materialism](#). In effect, those who favored the style viewed it as a cure-all for the soullessness that in their judgment had arrived with industrialization, factories, and all the rest. Now well into the twentieth century, historicists trusted Gothic to rebalance and redress the frailties of modernity.

The Tribune Building predominated in its neighborhood and beyond for years to come. One decade later, a radio station completed its new studios just north of the skyscraper in 1935. The transmitter's call sign WGN abbreviated the slogan by which the daily styled itself: the "World's Greatest Newspaper." Since radios with cathedral-like cabinets (see Fig. 6.32) were all the vogue too, good logic and symmetry supported construction of a "[Gothic radio structure](#)" for housing the up-to-the-minute broadcast technology.





Fig. 6.32 General Electric J-80 Cathedral Radio (1932). Photograph by Joe Mills, 2018.  
Image courtesy of Joe Mills. All rights reserved.

The spiritual objective of the Gothic skyscraper is still more evident in the even higher Chicago Temple Building (see Fig. 6.33). Called a skyscraper church, it was the tallest building in the Windy City (and in the United States outside New York City) from 1924 to 1930. As the First United Methodist Church of the metropolis, it houses no fewer than three sanctuaries. Unless we stipulate that such a place of worship must be devoted entirely to religious purposes, it is the tallest church in the world from street level to spire top. If the stricter definition applies, it loses out to the Ulm Minster in Germany. As we will see, the German cathedral was taken as an inspiration by modernists of that country at precisely this time.



Fig. 6.33 Postcard depicting the Chicago Temple Building, Chicago, IL  
(Chicago: Aero Distributing Co., early twentieth century).

Gothic combined the somewhat opposed qualities of being instantly age-old and yet promising timelessness or at least durability. To the jury chair, Howells and Hood belonged to a fresh peer group of young men with “New Spirit.” These new Goths sought inspiration by developing architecture from much earlier, pre-Columbian history, and by accommodating it to the new possibilities that steel-frame construction and elevators had enabled. They were truly a rising generation with a rising style.

### Giving Gothic: John D. Rockefeller Jr.

The Rockefeller family name is associated most tangibly with an [aggregation of buildings](#) and other major architectural components, originally fourteen but now twenty-one, in Midtown Manhattan. Known as Rockefeller Center, the complex is emphatically unmedieval in its Art Deco-ness, even though John D. Rockefeller Jr. (see Fig. 6.34) himself made a pitch for planning it in Gothic revival, and even though one of the two architects who designed it had worked in the office of Cram, Goodhue & Ferguson. Unsurprisingly, [Ralph Adams Cram vivisected the style](#) of the center as it was built. All the same, the entire assemblage has been labeled “the mid-century cathedral” (the century in question being, of course, the twentieth) and even “[our secular cathedral](#).” The cathedralic analogy is meant to bring home how this constellation of impressively high office buildings [occupies the same central space](#) in the landscape, real and imaginary, of modern city dwellers and visitors as great churches and their precincts did in bygone times. This claim has been undergirded by a quotation from a memoir by an Irish playwright that conveys how [modern-day pilgrims](#) (that is to say, day-trippers) to the metropolis seek out as their first stopping point not New York cathedrals such as St. John’s or St. Patrick’s but instead this compound.



Fig. 6.34 John D. Rockefeller Jr., age 41. Photograph by Underwood & Underwood, 1915. Washington, DC, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

Gothic was effectively precluded for the Rockefeller Center by a zoning resolution. To regulate the size of structures, a setback was prescribed. The zoners wanted, more or less, a ziggurat. Although stepped gables are feasible within the style, [pseudocathedrals formed into steps](#) are impossible to design: they are a contradiction in terms. All the same, the whole complex can be called—straight up—a cathedral. [30 Rock](#), as one address within the grouping has been dubbed for short, has been termed [the shrine](#). The support for its cathedralesque features came from the highest level. Rockefeller had as [his own space](#) an executive suite at the southwest corner of the fifty-sixth floor, more than a dozen stories short of what would be the penthouse, but still very far up (see Fig. 6.35). In accord with his favorite manner, the public benefactor installed at the top of the building a [fence](#) with somewhat incongruously stylized Gothic arches and slats to surround the Observation Deck. The metalwork was cast in aluminum, to harmonize with the spandrels. The color is a pale ashen, to simulate the lead that [Rockefeller would have preferred](#) instead of the cheaper and lighter substance. Other edifices in the original compound have similar constructions that culminated in slightly angular pointed leaves, as a final and finial gesture toward [the Gothic that Rockefeller favored](#).



Fig. 6.35 John D. Rockefeller Jr. in his Chicago office. Photograph by Bernard Hoffman, 1941. The LIFE Picture Collection.

John D. Rockefeller Jr. was a financier, son of an American oil magnate who was the richest man in America. John Senior's business practices led the Supreme Court to order the untwisting of his chief company for violation of antitrust laws. Both father and son were lifelong philanthropists. The liberality of the younger Rockefeller enabled

the construction and renovation of edifices across the United States in a multitude of architectural styles. Although amenable to a stylistic range that encompassed Egyptian and classical, he had a noteworthy [association with collegiate Gothic](#) architecture. Through the funding he provided, he was responsible for many acres of halls, dormitories, and libraries in the medieval mode from coast to coast. Alongside Rockefeller's personal generosity should be placed that of Edward Harkness. This Yale alumnus drilled into his oil millions so that he could foot the bill for the erection of residential colleges of his alma mater in collegiate Gothic. The family fortune welled up out of the silent partnership of [Edward's father](#) with John Senior, in the early years of [Standard Oil](#), which had been the 800-pound gorilla in the fossil-fuel industry.

Rockefeller's Gothicizing philanthropy was not limited to funding construction in twentieth-century Gothic. He also spent free-handedly on the transformation of the authentically medieval elements of George Barnard's Cloisters, a museum housing art from the Middle Ages. In the fullness of time, the original initiative metamorphosed into what is now The Cloisters, part of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. To this end, Rockefeller underwrote the acquisition of many [new components](#). By so doing, he enabled what had been an exciting but still inchoate architectural ensemble to be integrated into a full-fledged museum. Its contents matched the quality of the setting. In the overall architecture, Rockefeller's love of Sir Walter Scott's *Kenilworth* initially inspired him to woolgathering about [building a castle-like structure](#). Traces of this original conception linger in the rampart, entry gate, and portcullis of what was eventually erected. To this day, The Cloisters remains the only institution of its kind in the United States dedicated solely and exclusively to medieval art. Finally, to look beyond constructions of collegiate Gothic or re-creations of medieval Gothic in the United States, Rockefeller supported the reconstruction and maintenance of original structures in the style in Europe itself. On Memorial Day of 1924, for instance, he pledged a million dollars of financial assistance to the French government. A third of this sum was targeted to the [reroofing of Reims cathedral](#), which had been open to the elements since World War I.

The patronage of John D. Rockefeller Sr. hammered an enduring imprint of collegiate Gothic upon the campuses of Bryn Mawr, Princeton, and Chicago. His support began early, and it has been maintained through succeeding generations of his family, [rocking on into the twenty-first century](#) in the United States. To take an early example, Rockefeller Hall, the last residence hall designed by Cope and Stewardson at Bryn Mawr College, came in 1904 (see Fig. 6.36). Beyond the troika just mentioned, various other universities, colleges, and seminaries have benefited from Rockefeller generosity. For instance, Buttrick Hall at Vanderbilt University was raised in 1928 thanks in large part to the resources of the General Education Board, funded initially through John Senior (see Fig. 6.37). By no accident, the thoroughly Gothic crypt of the equally thoroughly Gothic National Cathedral in the nation's capital contains a stone plaque that has incised the gratitude of various southern colleges to John Junior for his repeated benefactions to them.

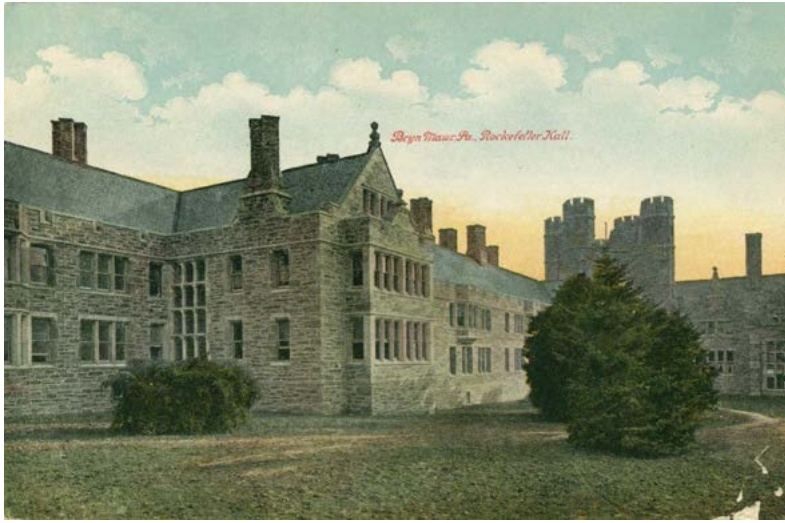


Fig. 6.36 Postcard depicting Rockefeller Hall, Bryn Mawr College, Bryn Mawr, PA (Philadelphia: World Post Card Co., early twentieth century).



Fig. 6.37 Buttrick Hall, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN.  
Photograph, date and photographer unknown.

In the profusion of collegiate Gothic, the style was sometimes put to bizarrely anachronistic uses. The erstwhile Bartlett Gymnasium at the University of Chicago is only one among many cases in point (see Fig. 6.38). Even before such medievaesque features as stained glass and a mural had been put in place, John D. Rockefeller Jr. himself posed a supremely down-to-earth question: “*Is it wise* to use the cathedral architecture in a gymnasium?”





Fig. 6.38 Bartlett Gymnasium, University of Chicago, Chicago, IL. Drawing by Shepley, Rutan, and Coolidge, 1904. Chicago, University of Chicago Library, Archival Photograph Files.  
Image courtesy of the University of Chicago. All rights reserved.

The support of John D. Rockefeller Jr. for Gothic and specifically collegiate Gothic construction work extended beyond commercial and academic institutions. Since the style received its definitive expression in ecclesiastical architecture, Gothic was a good choice for churches. In this vein, he commissioned the [Riverside Church](#) (see Figs. 6.39 and 6.40), built between the end of 1927 and 1930 in a collegiate Gothic heavily influenced by French Gothic. The house of prayer is presented from a perspective that makes its Gothic tower loom high above both a major historical monument, Grant's Tomb, and a triumph of modern technology, the George Washington Bridge. The architecture was even modeled to some extent after Chartres Cathedral, down to an adaptation of the floor maze or labyrinth found there (see Fig. 6.41). Rockefeller sought to bookend at least part of Manhattan with the imported Gothic of *The Cloisters* and the [revived Gothic](#) of [Riverside Church](#). The philanthropist also financed the [Central Presbyterian Church](#) in Manhattan (see Fig. 6.42), which was built in the Gothic manner between 1920 and 1922.

Rockefeller's dedication to Gothic ecclesiastical architecture was by no means restricted to Manhattan or even New York City. At [Colgate Rochester Divinity School](#), he funded the erection of a campus that was completed in 1932 in collegiate Gothic (see Fig. 6.43). At Bryn Mawr, the M. Carey Thomas Library followed Rockefeller Hall in 1906. Also funded largely thanks to Rockefeller's benefactions, its cloistered courtyard looked as if it had been built hundreds of years previously (see Fig. 6.44). The chief inspirations of Cope and Stewardson included the English colleges of Oxford and Cambridge. The designers acculturated so effectively to early twentieth-century America the architecture of Oxbridge that the new style they midwived came to symbolize the academic life.



Fig. 6.39 Postcard depicting Riverside Church, New York, NY (New York: Herman's Lunitone Photoprint, 1935).



Fig. 6.40 Postcard depicting Rockefeller's Church, Grant's Tomb, Riverside Drive, and George Washington Bridge, New York, NY (Boston: Tichnor Bros., early twentieth century).



Fig. 6.41 Floor labyrinth, Chartres Cathedral, Chartres, France. Photograph by Cindy Pavlinac, 2015. Image courtesy of Cindy Pavlinac. All rights reserved.

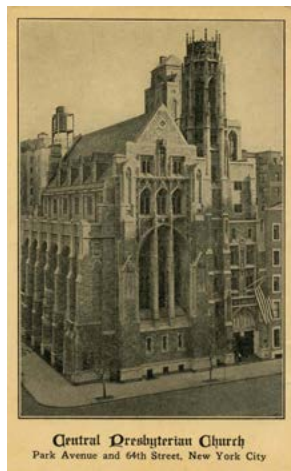


Fig. 6.42 Postcard depicting Central Presbyterian Church, New York, NY (early twentieth century).



Fig. 6.43 Postcard depicting Colgate-Rochester Divinity School, Rochester, NY (New York: Eagle Post Card View Co., early twentieth century).

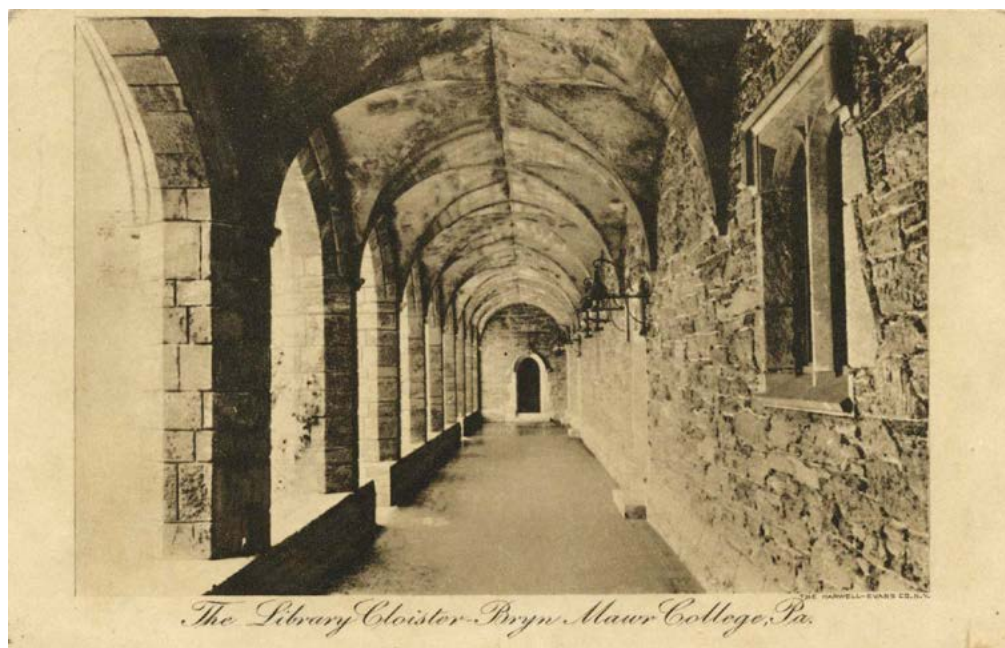


Fig. 6.44 Postcard depicting the Library Cloister at Bryn Mawr College, Bryn Mawr, PA (early twentieth century).



## “Not a Cathedral-Building Age” and Thorstein Veblen

The evidence, such as it may be, indicates that the Gilded Age may be seen more distinctly if viewed, at least occasionally, [without the aid of Thorstein Veblen’s spectacles](#).

The pronouncement “[ours is not a cathedral-building age](#)” can be found repeatedly in newspapers through out the US in 1879 and 1880, enough to make it seem hackneyed. In part, the preoccupation with great churches may have been prompted by the completion in 1880 of the Cologne *Dom*, in Gothic. American citizens on the grand tour would have noticed how Europeans, in the flush of nationalism, were completing the backlog of unfinished Gothic constructions or erecting entirely new ones. The average visitor today may have no idea that the cathedral façades of Florence and Naples were added in 1867–1887 and 1877–1905 respectively, but the work in progress would have been unmissable at the time.

In any case, the truism was broadcast most widely through its inclusion in an essay entitled “[An American Cathedral](#)” that Montgomery Schuyler published in 1892. The year of publication was most definitely not irrelevant. In marking the four-hundredth anniversary of Columbus’s arrival, the United States engaged in searching self-analysis. The architectural commentator opened his magisterial piece with a sentence that quotes the shibboleth, and refers to it as “so obviously true, and so familiar.” Yet would he have found “ours is not a cathedral-building age” still so readily applicable had he written the article fifteen or thirty years later? He may have made his avowal about cathedral-building just as the most Gothomaniacal architects settled down at their drafting tables and the most medievalizing masons took their chisels in hand. Furthermore, by asserting that the late nineteenth century was not a time of cathedrals, Schuyler did not necessarily profess that Gothic was unsuited to modernity.

In the last decade of the nineteenth century and first two of the twentieth, American institutions—ecclesiastical, educational, military, commercial, and governmental—committed boundless resources to raising ritzy buildings in assorted flavors of Gothic revival. Implicitly, in some cases even wittingly, this determination to build related to the rise of the United States of America as a [global political and economic power](#). Suddenly the country possessed monetary means with which to experiment. It could make itself look as it liked and own what it wished. Faced with this golden (and greenbacked) opportunity, it engaged in a national game of dress-up by trying on different pasts, mostly European ones, to see if it liked their look and fit. On an individual level, privileged revelers could pitch costumed balls; collectively, the historicism necessitated the building that architecture required as much as it did the buying of art and cultural realia.

The commitment of wealth to the construction of an Americanized Middle Ages did not come without controversy. One prominent opponent, the American economist and sociologist Thorstein Veblen, vilified the original, medieval, Gothic cathedral as [empty ostentation and imprudent expenditure](#), on the order of the pyramids (see Fig. 6.45). He found fault even more captiously with the re-creation of the same architecture centuries later and an ocean away in collegiate Gothic. To him, Chicago, Yale, Trinity College in Hartford, and other campuses were frittering resources on inefficiency: the style was a throwback, an atavistic reversion to a past not quite as out of the way as the cavemen but as little relevant to the modern world as the Pleistocene. Yet he discerned in Gothic even worse elements of American society in play.

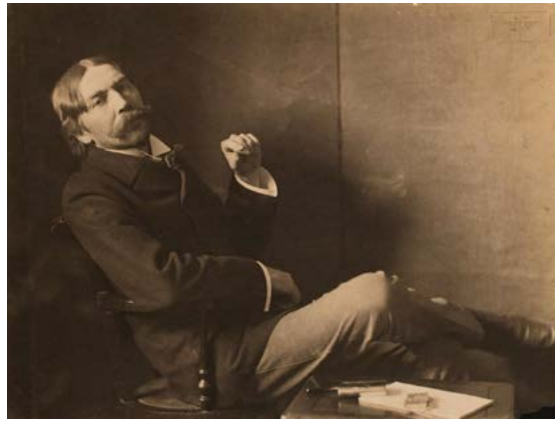


Fig. 6.45 Thorstein Veblen. Platinum print, ca. 1902, by Eva Watson-Schütze. Courtesy of the George Eastman Museum, Rochester, NY. All rights reserved.

In Veblen's reading of the architectural and socioeconomic landscape, both the originals and the re-creations gave voice to the gusto for "conspicuous consumption" by leisure classes. The archetypal barons of the Middle Ages anticipated the robber ones of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The vulgarian spendthrifts of his age squandered bucketloads of money on vain ostentation. Class exploitation entered the picture as the rich wastrels pressed poor laborers into serf-like service to put together their castles in the sky, or cathedrals on the manicured lawns.

Oddly, the economist sounded some tones reminiscent of Cram and the most impassioned of Gothic proponents. Like them, he railed against meaningless manifestations of caste, wealth, and culture. Of course, the hollowness he censured first and foremost was the gaping space within Rockefeller-funded Gothic edifices on his own campus, the University of Chicago. These had been erected for the classrooms, studies, offices, libraries, and laboratories that he and his colleagues used. The great professor [thundered against the extravagance and impracticality](#). To his hypercritical eye, the buildings of the Gothic revival were poorly matched to the purposes they needed to serve. What did the dead hand (and heads) of gargoyles have to do with



the living reality of modernity? What functions were served by steep gables, towers, dormers, oriels, crockets, spiky finials, spandrels, and tracery? The steeples may appear to soar, but cost-benefit analysis proves that appearance to be illusory: they are sinkholes—money pits.

By contrast, Gothicizers chose to see in operation a more high-minded process. President William Rainey Harper of the University of Chicago (see Fig. 6.46) appraised the labor of the masons who raised collegiate Gothic buildings throughout the United States, reaching, like others, a sunny assessment of their work that is redolent of the [protosocialism](#) preached by William Morris and the Arts and Crafts Movement. The outlook of Harper and cohort contradicted the argument that classicism stands in the same relationship to democracy as Gothic to elitism. Instead, the Goths of the Gilded Age preferred to accentuate the romantic, moralistic, and monastic worth of the architectural style they promoted.



Fig. 6.46 William Rainey Harper. Photograph by Gibson Art Galleries, before 1905. Published in *The World's Work* 11 (Nov. 1905–April 1906) (New York: Doubleday, Page, 1905), 6912.

Image courtesy of the University of Toronto, Toronto. All rights reserved.

Matter-of-factly, Veblen took Gothic to task for requiring high-priced building materials, for being ill suited to the construction practices of his day, and for producing nonfunctional results. From a practical standpoint, he was scathing about the poor acoustics and even worse lighting that he associated with the style. He ridiculed the anachronism of performing modern scientific research within buildings that conjured up a medieval dream-world. He hooted at having modern-day instructors and students conduct their activities in lobbies that “[might once have served as a mustering place](#) for a body of unruly men-at-arms.” Aesthetically, the social scientist bridled at the grey limestone exteriors of the campus that John D. Rockefeller Jr. founded and funded on the south side of Chicago. He found the façades stonily somber rather than stone-cold sober. To him, they signaled secession from the beauty and vitality of the world rather

than a reprieve from its materialism. In sum, the professor regarded the fashion as resulting in “wasteful, ornate, and meretricious edifices” that the barons of his day were gulled into believing would be “a competent expression of their cultural hopes and ambitions.” He conjectured that in the next shift of stylistic taste “the disjointed grotesqueries of an eclectic and modified Gothic” would pass into “the same category of apologetic neglect” to which in his times mid-Victorianism had been relegated. How much should we be won over by Veblen’s dire denunciations? Economists have seldom done very well at predicting the future—except retrospectively, when their eyesight tends to be nearly invariably twenty-twenty.

In the expressions Veblen made famous, collegiate Gothic was conspicuous consumption directed toward the end of status emulation. Yet for all its vim and verve, his vituperation did not stanch the spread of the fashion on American campuses, not even on his own at Chicago. The turrets, buttresses, and gargoyles stand to this day. What alternative did he offer? His druthers might have been the efficient modernism and digital anonymity of MIT, where university buildings have numbers rather than names. Who is to criticize those decisions regarding style and nomenclature—but at the same time, who would argue that they should have been applied at all institutions of higher learning? For that matter, have we fared better since the demise of collegiate Gothic, which at least paid close attention to the interaction of edifices and landscape—not that it is easier, even for professional metrologists, to measure the profit that comes of aesthetic harmony and environmental responsibility? To the eye of at least this one laic, many campuses have forsaken an attempt to impose a presiding spirit. Instead, they have embraced what could be considered a mix-and-match eclecticism. In the process they become theme parks, with single buildings designed by this or that brand-name architect. As a consequence, the constructions lack coherence or integration into the greater physical space. Such was not always the case.

In the days of collegiate Gothic, spats over architecture were fought openly and hard. Culture wars, like most others, often end in wins and losses. In my opinion, we are lucky that Veblen was overruled. Only time will tell, but over the long haul the Gothic splurge of the nouveaux riches in the Gilded Age may turn out to have been (especially those towers) a tip-top investment—capital and spiritual—for the nation.

## Seeing Chicago in Gray and White

To celebrate the four-hundredth anniversary of when the Italian explorer and his crew sailed the ocean blue, sighted land, and set their feet upon sand untouched by European feet, Chicago played host to the World’s Columbian Exposition, which opened in 1893. At the same time, the booming urban center experienced a famous showdown between two architectural styles and cultural significances. The crossfire pitted against each other a pair of districts, freshly built or under construction. The two areas were designated by opposing appellations, *the White City and the Gray*

City (see Figs. 6.47 and 6.48). The pair of so-called cities contrasted starkly with the tenements that made up much of the rest of the metropolis. Both arrived two decades or so after the Great Chicago Fire.



Fig. 6.47 Postcard depicting an aerial view of the “White City,” World’s Columbian Exposition, Chicago, IL (New York, Chicago: Schmidt, ca. 1906).

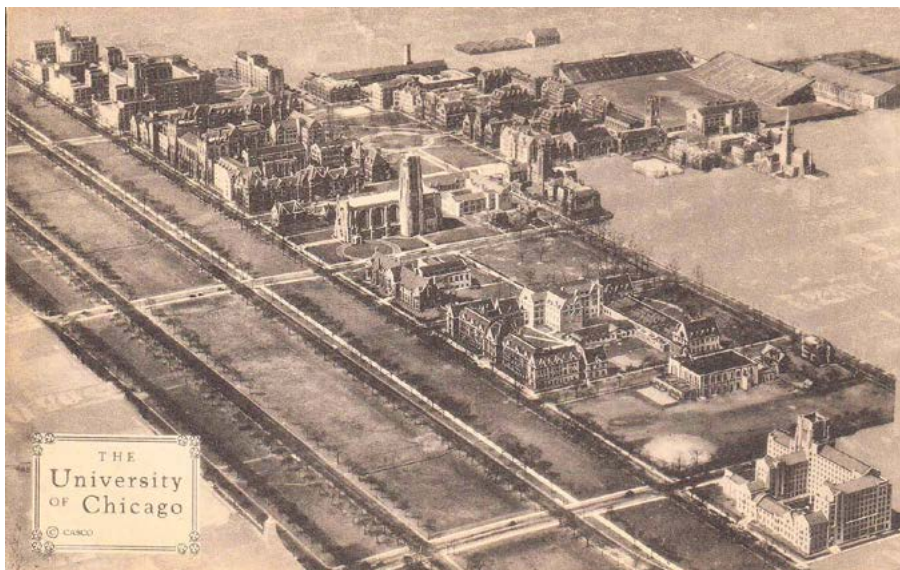


Fig. 6.48 Postcard depicting an aerial view of the “Gray City,” University of Chicago, Chicago, IL (Chicago: Casco, early twentieth century).



The conflagration of 1871 devastated much of the business district. The destruction left key swaths of the urban area an erased sheet of blueprint paper on which to fill in the blanks and diagram the future. In steel and iron, brick and stone, the Windy City erected its self-image as a distinctively American municipality (and perhaps in its own immodest eyes as *the* most distinctive one), at a point when the whole country was taking on new roles for itself in the world.

The White City was official. The architectural array was constructed temporarily for the World's Fair. Its centerpiece was the Court of Honor, with its buildings clad in gleaming white-painted stucco (see Fig. 6.49). The prevailing fashion was conditioned heavily by [French neoclassicism](#) that held to Beaux Arts principles. Did the commitment to this architecture succeed? Henry Adams was less satisfied by the incandescent neoclassical dome of the great [Administration Building](#) than he was by [the dynamos](#) he encountered first at the Chicago Exposition. In subsequent years he would fumble and flounder his way toward an idiosyncratic equipoise between modernism of technology and medievalism of spirit. That very contrast was graven already upon the face of the Windy City itself.



Fig. 6.49 Postcard depicting the "White City,"  
Chicago, IL (early twentieth century).

In chiaroscuro opposition to its whitened twin, the Gray City encompassed the neo-Gothic edifices of the establishment for higher learning that were taking shape across the midway (see Fig. 6.50). Looming quadrangles of gray Indiana limestone

were fitted together in the style to allow for orderly growth as the “University on the Midway” expanded. The adoption of a thoroughly collegiate Gothic roadmap for the development of the new educational institution in Chicago was somewhat paradoxical, since it was a research facility very much on the German model rather than a college modeled after what Americans imagined Oxford and Cambridge to be.

Should the university have committed itself to the luminous transience of the White City, most of which disappeared precipitately? Or should it have built more practical structures, along the lines of those familiar to Veblen from his youth? He failed to recognize that for variety’s sake even the grounds of the World’s Fair eventually acquired their own traces of Gothicism, detectable in the entrance to the roller coaster known as Devil’s Gorge, which opened around 1907 in the amusement park associated with the original Exposition. The portal leading up to the ride bears more than a faint family resemblance to the medieval-but-not-medieval gargoyles of Notre-Dame in Paris (see Fig. 6.51). In any event, the scrap in the United States over collegiate Gothic was still in its early days.



Fig. 6.50 Postcard depicting an aerial view of the University of Chicago, Chicago, IL (Chicago: Max Rigot Selling Co., early twentieth century).

The anti-Goths would not win for a couple of decades—and the change in the balance of power had more to do with the downward vortex of the economy during the Great Depression than with the articulacy of modernists who never warmed to neo-Gothic.





Fig. 6.51 Postcard depicting the “Devil’s Gorge” at the White City Amusement Park, Chicago, IL (Chicago: Franklin Post Card Co., ca. 1908–1915).

## Hooting at Yale Gothic

Collegiate Gothic architecture had what might be called its archenemies. Not quite four decades later, the skirmish between collegiate Gothic and modernism flared up again, perhaps even more overpoweringly. This time the field of contention lay within Yale University. William Harlan Hale was an undergraduate (Yale class of 1931) who went on to distinction later as a professional journalist. While a student, he cofounded a [short-lived](#) but extraordinary magazine, *The Harkness Hoot* (see Fig. 6.52). In 1930, he published in it a remarkable deconstruction of Sterling Memorial Library, conceived very deliberately as a Gothic cathedral, with a tower that would loom over the Cross Campus. When [announcing the design](#), the Yale librarian proclaimed that the building would consolidate factory-like functionality and cathedral-like beauty.



Fig. 6.52 William Harlan Hale and Selden Rodman, editors of *The Harkness Hoot*. Photograph, ca. 1930. Photographer unknown. Published in William L. Peltz, *History of the Class of 1931, Yale College* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Class Secretaries Bureau, 1931), image no. 8812.

With all the intensity of youth (see Fig. 6.53), Hale had the courage of his convictions. Among various contentions, he argued that “in living architecture there is no such thing as ‘style’; the term appears only when architecture is considered as a phenomenon of the past.” Despite this straightforward disavowal that a contemporary manner could even exist, Hale made clear his preference for a modernist design in place of what had been built. He described Sterling Memorial in the first paragraph of his tract as “designed in the Gothic-skyscraper style.” In an unforgettably impassioned cannonade against this manifestation of collegiate Gothic in New Haven, he posed a rhetorical question to which he provided an instantaneous answer:

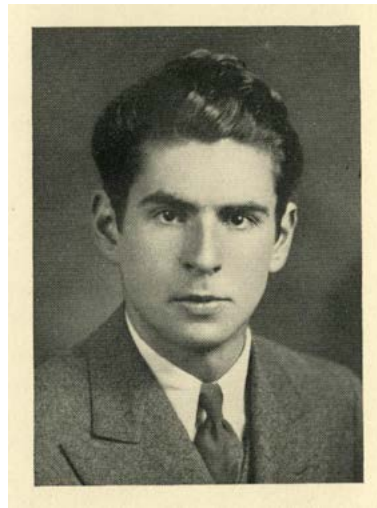


Fig. 6.53 William Harlan Hale, age 21. Photograph, 1931. Published in William L. Peltz, *History of the Class of 1931*, Yale College (New Haven, CT: Yale University Class Secretaries Bureau, 1931), 239.

How can students be educated to artistic appreciation under the eaves of an architecture that puts water tanks into church towers, and lavatories into oriels? It runs counter to every creative conception: it demands that the modern young man nurture himself on a diet of frozen mediaevalism.

In the last sentence, Hale made the common mistake of slipping from a persuasive point based on his own perspectives into prescription for all others. He wrote in the singular of “the modern young man,” as if all tastes could be scaled back to one—his own, as the supreme exemplar of this species that he was. Talk with any nutritionist and you will hear that a balanced diet requires nutritional values that come from a full basket of nutrients. Some good things, not merely comfort food, may be pulled occasionally out of the freezer and unwrapped.

In any time and place, reductionism, whether it is driven by conservatives or by progressives, carries dangers. The imposition of a single viewpoint upon everyone is totalitarianism. Healthy cultures need to consider and take in moderation, many

inspirations, a rainbow of extremes. Across the Atlantic in Italy, Germany, and the Soviet Union, “the modern young men” of different countries would be equipped soon enough with single national flavors of modern architecture to suit the single parties of their modern world. In those cases, what Harlan dragged through the mud as “frozen medievalism” might have been a better alternative, as one ingredient in an eclectic mix. There have been far worse things.

In this exceptional manifesto against what Hale regarded as retrograde architecture, he published a photograph of the library’s book tower while under construction, swathed in scaffolding. Beneath he supplied an “if only”: “It might have been made into a monumental modern building—with the structural and decorative ideas evolved by the American skyscraper designers newly adapted to a splendid and living institutional structure.” On the facing page, he [contrasted the final product](#). The collocation of the two images is a touch of genius, but not without both intended and unintended irony. The first is that the college student faults the architects of Sterling Memorial Library for humbuggery in blanking out its structural elements. The arch-Goth among architects, Pugin, was celebrated in [an obituary letter](#) printed after his death for having decried this very deficiency in the then-modern architecture of his day, and for having remedied it in his own brand of Gothic revival. Knowingly or not, Hale delivered his withering criticism of collegiate Gothic by using the same contrastive method that Pugin had employed to great satiric effect—the Englishman’s *Contrasts* from 1836 contained its series of plates to bring out “A Parallel between the Noble Edifices of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries and Similar Buildings of the Present Day.” In the content of his assault, Hale sounded a note similar to Eric Gill, who opined: “[Culture is a sham](#) if it is only a sort of Gothic front put on an iron building—like Tower Bridge.”

A second irony is that Sterling Memorial Library has been fairly called “[a functionalist tour de force](#); books and paper movements are sorted out, rationalized, and mechanized.” Yet at least some modern designers have been infuriated by two traits of the structure. One is that the functionality has been hidden behind a stone skin designed to conjure up a medieval past of cathedrals and castles. The result is classic tactic of bait and switch: viewers who are being sold the architecture are led to believe that they are buying an apparent bargain, when instead substandard goods are being substituted. The other irksome characteristic of the building is that the whole has been embellished with ornaments, especially carvings, that both entertain and edify. For instance, the practicality of book stacks within the information center was both counterbalanced and complemented by Gothicizing ornamentation outside it. An author wrote in 1906 of the cathedral of Amiens: “[The façade is set up against the sky](#) like a great frontispiece of images to a printed book, the book which Ruskin has called the Bible of Amiens” (see Figs. 6.54 and 6.55). The exterior of Sterling expresses in twentieth-century terms this sharp-eyed perception of medieval iconography. Cleverly, the false front incorporates images relating to writing and printing that play upon old [associations drawn between cathedrals and books](#).



Fig. 6.54 The Northern Porch of the Cathedral of Amiens, Ruskin's so-called "Bible of Amiens." Engraving by G. Allen after John Ruskin, 1884. Published in John Ruskin, *"Our Fathers Have Told Us": Sketches of the History of Christendom* (Sunnyside, UK: George Allen, 1884), between pp. 40 and 41.

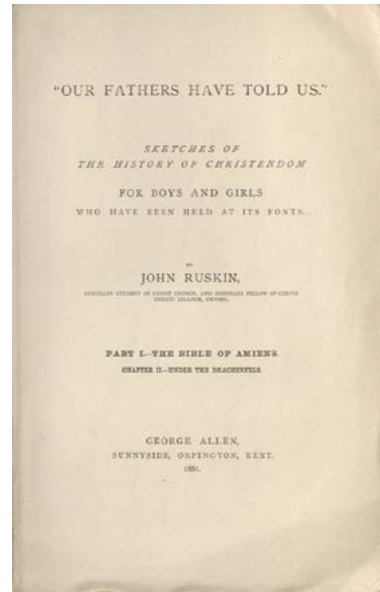


Fig. 6.55 Title page of John Ruskin, *"Our Fathers Have Told Us": Sketches of the History of Christendom* (Sunnyside, UK: George Allen, 1881).

For his bluster, Hale raked in his share of plaudits. The unexampled Frank Lloyd Wright requested ten complimentary copies of the article. More to the point, the great man even held a hootenanny and had his second-in-command make a drafting table into a soapbox. From that vantage point, the aide read the whole text aloud to the assembled team. The piece was reworked and won further notice when reprinted as "[Yale's Cathedral Orgy](#)" in *The Nation*. As might have been foreseen, [Ralph Adams Cram](#) responded with a decided dearth of enthusiasm. By the younger set who inclined toward modernism, he would have been regarded as the arch villain or limestone blockhead—the ideal target for a volley of anti-lancet archery.

Perhaps more importantly, the visceral reaction of this one modernophile undergraduate was unrepresentative of the Yale community members who lived and labored in the buildings upon whose architecture he decanted his scorn. He may have been an archenemy of the collegiate style, but he stood almost alone in his distaste. The general fondness of administrators and Hale's classmates for the faux Middle Ages, despite his own high-handed condemnation, may be gauged from the frontispiece to the yearbook in the year in which he graduated. It suggests that the lancet and Gothic had snared the hearts of his fellow members of the college and that for their part they did not give a hoot about any of his criticisms (see Fig. 6.56). Many Yalies and faculty

within the residential colleges liked being walled off from the city that engulfed the university, liked the unplanned encounters encouraged by the courtyards within, and liked the stone carvings, stained glass, organs, and other frills of the medieval architecture. Consistently, they loved Sterling Memorial Library. As has been the case with many collegiate Gothic buildings and campuses, the place has entranced a large public, even as it has disgruntled professional architects. Cherished or not, it is an abiding icon that is used as shorthand to signify the very Yaleness of Yale.

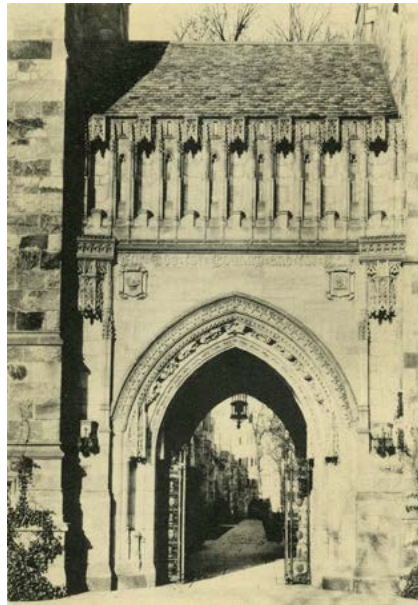


Fig. 6.56 A collegiate Gothic arch from Yale University, New Haven, CT. Photograph, before 1931. Photographer unknown. Published in William L. Peltz, *History of the Class of 1931, Yale College* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Class Secretaries Bureau, 1931), frontispiece.

In eerie ways, Hale's faulting of the spirit (or lack thereof) instantiated in collegiate Gothic foresaw denunciations of American students and the college environment that [Le Corbusier](#) would advance a few years later. The Swiss-born but Paris-based comet of French modernism developed his [gross generalizations](#) and crass contempt largely thanks to visits to Princeton and Vassar in the fall of 1935. Not biting his tongue for a nanosecond, he censured the college boys of those days in the United States for [living cloistered lives](#) that made them pampered, fainthearted, and even castrated in comparison with their French counterparts. He all but accused Gothic of lowering sperm count and testosterone levels.

In the introduction to the English translation that appeared more than a decade later in 1946, Le Corbusier leveled pitiless potshots at the GIs who participated in the liberation of France. There would be no risk in wagering that in the same year as he carped, the American soldiers, both living and dead, on and in French soil included a



share of the college graduates he had earlier deemed unmanly. For his part, the big-name architect had taught rather than fought in World War I. To make matters worse, in its encore he sought sponsorship from the collaborationist Vichy government. It seems fair to wonder how qualified he was to assess virility and courage or their opposites. He was not overjoyed with his country's performance during the hostilities, but even less that the United States rode to the rescue. And so he took out his frustrations upon the universities of the nation he resented.

Despite many flaws, collegiate Gothic provided, very literally, an overarching wholeness. The stylistic organicity has helped to sustain an illusion of integrity at least in architecture. Such unity is by no means a constant in universities, despite the oneness with which their very name begins. In fact, at the time when the style took hold, many universities, especially private ones, were undergoing a marriage of convenience between undergraduate liberal arts colleges modeled on the British system and specialized graduate schools patterned after German models. In any case, the Gothic of American campuses was too pertinacious to yield in the face of harangues by Veblen, Hale, or anyone else. Yet other and greater forces would change the motivations for the revival, as well as the responses to it.

Eventually, collegiate Gothic would largely run its course. No fashion holds or should wield power forever. Dreams always end, even dreamlike manners of art and architecture. Still, the style would be hard to expunge because of its inherent ambition to transcend the millennia. By design, it was anchored with its weighty slabs of stone in a *longue durée*. Its chronological ambit started from a remote past that burst into being in the twelfth century and stretched at least through the fifteenth, through a present in the twentieth, and into an unfixed but distant future. The rich stylistic pedigree laid claim to hallowed antecedents far back in time, while the rock-solid stability of its construction looked to endure far ahead. Woodrow Wilson, president then of a university dedicated at his exhortation to the nation's service, regarded the appropriation of Tudor Gothic as a device that [elongated the authority behind the institution](#) by nearly a thousand years.

This way of thinking was not universally accepted. Opinions have never been unanimous on whether age looks good or not. [On the one hand](#), admirers of patina and verdigris hug the principle that old things should look old—and even that new ones should camouflage their newness. On the other, proponents of youth and novelty reject the wear and tear of decay. In 1910, a Chicago PhD-holder whimpered and whined about the “artificial aging process” that had eventuated in a faux old institution. His bon mot ran, “[The University of Chicago does not look its age](#). It looks much older.” More than one century later, the counterargument could be made that the choice of style explains why the same structures seem ageless. At Yale in 1930, Hale took issue with reasoning that favored an architectural style from the Middle Ages for institutions of higher learning all because they originated in the medieval period, riding this train of thought to its terminus in the logical absurdity of a sophism:

“Modern scholarship had its birth and spent its youth in Gothic buildings; therefore modern scholars should continue to work in mediaeval buildings.”

New Haven saw one of the last and loveliest broad-scale manifestations of the collegiate style. The city also possesses one of the earliest major expressions of Gothic revival that survives in North America in the Episcopal Trinity Church, built on the Green in 1813 and 1814 (see Fig. 6.57). Yale University committed heavily to older forms of the architecture long before the collegiate kind became the prevailing flavor of the revival. Of these earlier buildings the eldest is *Dwight Chapel*, designed as a library in the mid-1840s (see Fig. 6.58). Four decades later came *Victorian dormitories*, from 1885 to 1886 (see Figs. 6.59, 6.60 and 6.61).

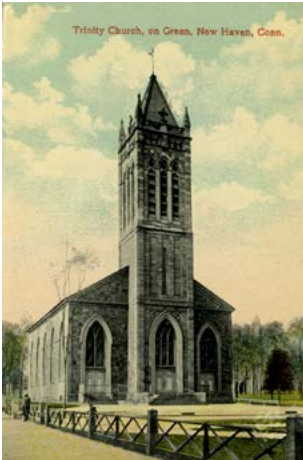


Fig. 6.57 Postcard depicting Trinity Church, New Haven, CT (early twentieth century).



Fig. 6.58 Postcard depicting Dwight Hall, Yale University, New Haven, CT (New York: Paul C. Koeber, ca. 1905).

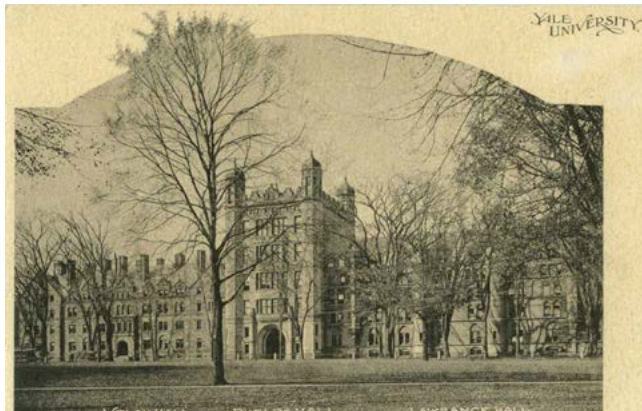


Fig. 6.59 Postcard depicting Welch Hall, Phelps Hall, and Lawrence Hall, Yale University, New Haven, CT (New York: The Albertype Company, ca. 1906).





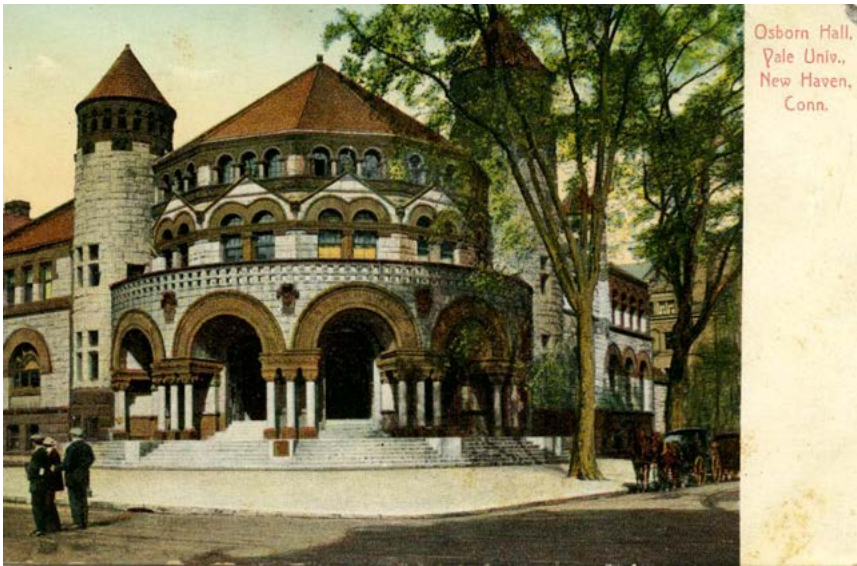


Fig. 6.62 Postcard depicting Osborn Hall, Yale University, New Haven, CT (E. P. J. Co., ca. 1909).



Fig. 6.63 Postcard depicting Bingham Hall, Yale University, New Haven, CT (Boston: American Art Post Card Co., early twentieth century).

The most telling expression of the revival at Yale came in the residential colleges. Of eight constructed in the 1930s, fully six were Gothic. Another had a Gothic exterior but a Georgian interior façade. *Only one was entirely Georgian revival*. Among the many expressions of Gothicism not in dormitories, the most massive is the abovementioned Sterling Memorial Library (see Fig. 6.64). Although planned originally by the architect

Bertram Goodhue, [its design](#), to be built of granite with limestone trim, was the work of James Gamble Rogers, the architect whose vision defined the university in New Haven in the first half of the twentieth century. Whereas most of the landscaping by Beatrix Farrand has sadly perished, the architecture remains with its combination of [soaring lightness and medievaesque gravitas](#).

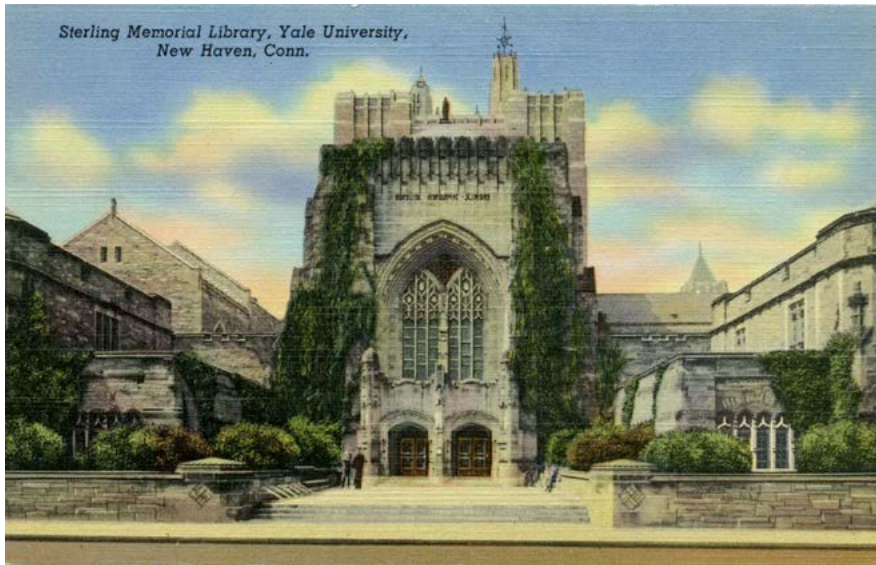


Fig. 6.64 Postcard depicting Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University, New Haven, CT (early twentieth century).

If the library is a collegiate Gothic church for the reverence of books, its nave terminates at the circulation desk. That accouterment is modeled upon an altar in a house of worship. In lieu of an altarpiece dedicated to the Virgin Mary, a female who hypostatized Yale's nurturing spirit occupied the center of [a mural at the western end of the counter](#) (see Fig. 6.65). The fresco was entitled *The Imagination That Directs the University's Spiritual and Intellectual Efforts* by its professor-painter Eugene Savage. The painting is commonly called by the catchier or at least more pronounceable name of "The Alma Mater Mural." It depicts the personified university, dressed in a blue like a Madonna—but the color is a Yale blue, like a gown worn at commencement. Standing beneath the ramifying foliage of the tree of knowledge, she is surrounded in turn by [personifications of arts and sciences](#) as they present their gifts, like Magi.

When a Yale senior, Hale juxtaposed the ideas "cathedral" and "orgy" to describe Sterling Memorial Library. By doing so, he cut to the heart of a debate that has not yet been resolved. In cyclical culture wars, contention has long raged over the nature of universities. Two hot-button topics have regarded the places that [religion and the past](#) should occupy within them. A book repository with cutting-edge facilities that was built to look like a medieval church was the perfect catalyst for polemics.





Fig. 6.65 Eugene Savage, *The Imagination That Directs the University's Spiritual and Intellectual Efforts* ("The Alma Mater Mural"), 1931. Fresco. New Haven, CT, Yale University, Sterling Memorial Library. Photograph by Carol M. Highsmith, 2011. Washington, DC, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, the George F. Landegger Collection of Connecticut Photographs in Carol M. Highsmith's America Project.

## World War I and Modernism

Even more than the Spanish-American conflict had done, World War I brought home to Americans how the honor of empire entails the onus of imperialism. Henry Adams wrote his *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres* around the turn of the century and printed it privately in 1904, but he made it publicly available only on the eve of combat. In the changed world that took shape after the Treaty of Versailles in 1919, his book may have seemed predictive or even prophetic. The Gothic revival was often intended to solemnize faith and spirituality. The author pinpointed forces that were attenuating these very values. Look at the lucidity with which at the end of chapter ten he says a melancholy but still tranquil goodbye to both the cathedral and the Virgin:

We have done with Chartres. For seven hundred years Chartres has seen pilgrims, coming and going more or less like us; and will perhaps see them for another seven hundred years, but we shall see it no more, and can safely leave the Virgin in her Majesty,

with her three great prophets on either hand, as calm and confident in their own strength and in God's providence as they were when Saint Louis was born, but looking down from a deserted Heaven, into an empty church, [on a dead faith](#).

Less than two decades later, these valedictory remarks had taken on an added charge of poignancy. By the time Adams died in 1918, the war had shown the potential of new technologies for inflicting death and destruction. The dynamos may not have violated the Virgin herself, but they left some of her shrines to lie in smoking ruins. For millions, the wake of the prolonged armed confrontation resulted in an immeasurably different Europe. Gone were the culture and climate that had existed when *Our Lady's Tumbler* was brought to light, the short story *Le jongleur de Notre Dame* written, and Massenet's opera by the same title first sung. For men dazed by battle fatigue who resorted to the Mother of God for succor, the slaughterhouse of the trench warfare at the front stood irreversibly far from the now-gone glitter of belle époque opera houses. A postcard made from [a 1914 painting](#) offers a case in point (see Fig. 6.66). The canvas depicts Mary in her role as "the consoling Virgin." Embodying mercy and sheltering those faithful to her, she holds out promise of miraculous intervention in times of deepening crisis.



Fig. 6.66 "La vierge consolatrice." Painting by Sergey Solomko, 1914.  
Reproduced on postcard (Paris: I. Lapina, 1914).

The Middle Ages had played a supporting role in the war effort. Chivalry and Crusades had been mustered to the objective of [pumping up hawkish values in young men](#). If France had Saint Joan, Britain had George: [the saintly dragon-slayer](#) held sway until the bloodshed began in deadly earnest. For that matter, the work of the young women in the Red Cross first to nurse wounded soldiers and later to cope with the sequelae of the influenza in 1919 were retailed, like the war itself, as holy campaigns (see Fig. 6.67). As the years wore on, the context must have seemed at least sometimes less sacred.



Fig. 6.67 A white knight crusading under the banner of the red cross, attended by a female angel. Painting by Charles Nicholas Sarka, 1918. Published on the front cover of *Leslie's*, April 20, 1918.

As mass death turned into a reality in the gory war zones, pugilistic sanctity lost much of the appeal that it had exercised earlier during playacting. Pacifism recaptured some of its lost luster. Kenneth Grahame had sounded a precociously pacific note in "The Reluctant Dragon" from 1898. Now the [war-weary voices](#) of conscientious objection and peacemaking became belatedly more audible and appreciated. At this juncture, the tales of the tumbler and jongleur could have exercised a charm by being very different from Saints Joan and George. These characters stood outside the militarism of the Crusades far more even than lone knights did—far more than knights errant, knights in shining armor, and white knights. The juggler offered access to other, more peaceful and conflict-free Middle Ages.

Despite idiosyncrasies, *Mont Saint Michel* and *Chartres* fell inside the special province that medieval literature and culture staked out for itself within a larger dominion

of anti-modernism. [Resistance to modernism](#) was one cultural option in the closing decades of the nineteenth and opening decades of the twentieth centuries. Then again, it may be simplistic and erroneous to stereotype the place of the Middle Ages in America during this transitional period as having been anti-modernist. Medievalism need not have been opposed to modernism. Instead, it could have been nonmodernist, premodernist, or even, more neutrally, paramodernist.

The explanation for the ambiguous position of medievalism is not too elusive. By having no truck with established values, modernism sought and brought splintering and ruptures that included a break with classicism. Medieval revivals had something in common with classicizing movements, in that they sought or at least laid claim to revive the past. At the same time, they were themselves anticlassical. Thus, elements of them could be appropriated, at least in stylized forms, within modernism, even if in aggregate the renewals were rejected. Hence, the openness of Art Deco to stylized Gothic ogees. In its basic contours, Art Deco (especially in the subcategory of Gothic Deco) relies heavily upon stylization of such elements that were arrogated from Gothic revivalism. The new fashion did not displace its predecessor, though it may have seemed to do so. In many features, the typically modern American style evolved naturally from the consummately medievalizing one.

The architects who designed Gothic revival buildings, especially during the first three decades of the twentieth century, generated a wide range of constructions in other fashions, while their peers who are now hallowed as archetypal modernists were not at every breathing moment fundamentally ill-disposed to the medievaesque style. The question was not a simple one of old and new, or of mossbacks against avant-gardists, since Gothic as developed in this expanse of more than a quarter century was itself [perceived to be innovative](#).

Ralph Adams Cram capped [a rousing oration](#) to English architects, published in 1912, with an affirmation: the collegiate Gothic that he advocated was meant not to put the new into a holding pattern but instead to pave the way for it. His conceit that the style transplanted Oxford to the vigorous midst of America is found also in [Schuyler](#). Along similar lines, Norman Bel Geddes's proposal for a staging of Dante's *Divine Comedy* makes for fascinating reading. The [introduction by Max Reinhardt](#) describes the author as being characteristically American—childlike but coolheaded, clairvoyant but clocklike, a builder of castles in the sky but with solidly grounded foundations (see Fig. 6.68). Bel Geddes was a theatrical and industrial designer associated with futuristic and Art Deco plans for automobiles, buildings, computers, and highways, as well as dramatic stages. In this introduction, he is understood as being, not that Reinhardt resorts to this Latin phrase, a *homo mediaevalis redivivus*, a medieval man brought back to life, commanding the youthful freshness and fast metabolism of that earlier era. He constructs castles and cathedrals, while making all the necessary changes—aerodynamically, aesthetically, and otherwise—for a modern world.



Fig. 6.68 Norman Bel Geddes. Photograph by Arnold Genthe, 1925.

Modernism and medievalism were not at all mutually exclusive in architectural planning. To take a bookish approach, consider, for instance, the cover to a 1931 New York publication of *Victor Hugo's Notre-Dame de Paris* in English translation (see Fig. 6.69). The style of the lettering is Art Deco. Even more so is the design, which presents what could be the stylized top of a skyscraper against an equally stylized sky, with gold lines of varying thickness stamped beautifully upon an indigo blue background. The Gothic might seem to have vanished altogether, if the viewer fails to observe the two lancets that lend the tower its basic definition. The gilt imprint on the front of the volume bears a startling resemblance to the façade of the *Grundtvig Church* in Copenhagen, which has step gables that look as if they are in motion: any more movement and we would be justified in calling them an escalator. The exterior of the place of worship, constructed mostly between 1921 and 1926, fuses so-called brick expressionism and Gothic architecture (see Fig. 6.70). Both the American book and the Danish church could be related profitably to the helm of the Chrysler Building in New York City, with its stylized gargoyles and arches (see Fig. 6.71).

Further evidence that medievalism was not automatically antimodernist, nor modernism antimedievalist, comes from none other than Frank Lloyd Wright. Yes, it must be owned up at the outset that the architect made pronouncements that could be taken as blanket *denunciations of historicizing architecture* in any form. All the same, his position was not nearly as simple as some of his prose could be understood to suggest, and he may not have stopped to think that the most radical and numerous *isms* have emerged from conscious efforts to sweep away their predecessors.



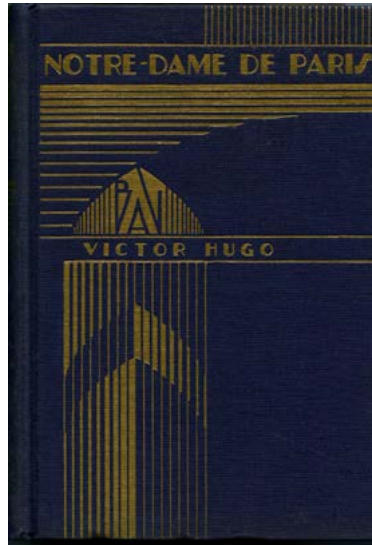


Fig. 6.69 Front cover of Victor Hugo, *Notre-Dame de Paris* (New York: The Book League of America, 1931).



Fig. 6.70 Grundtvig Church, Copenhagen. Lantern slide, 1926. Photographer unknown.

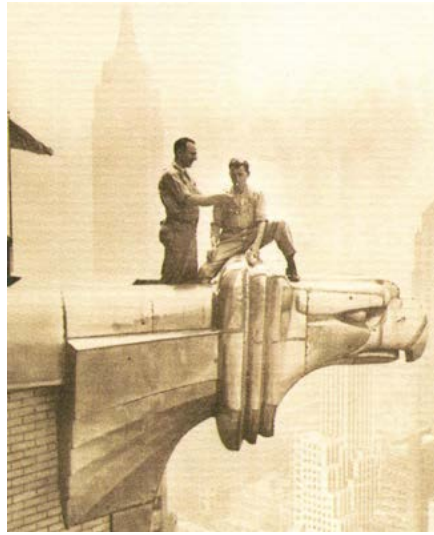


Fig. 6.71 Art Deco gargoyle on the exterior of the Chrysler Building, New York, NY.  
Photograph by Charles Clyde Ebbets, 1932.

Wright's best-known work of exterior construction and interior design would surely be the cantilevered modernity of Fallingwater, also known as the Kaufmann Residence. The site, completed in 1935, gives the supreme expression to Wright's creed of [organic architecture](#). This defining trait of his related to the holism that has appealed to many in Gothic. For instance, in 1939 he acknowledged in writing the [organic unity](#) of the Gothic cathedral. The architect's acquaintance with great churches rested on foundations that included [extensive readings](#) of Victor Hugo, Ruskin, and Viollet-le-Duc. Even before Wright was born, the path was being readied to familiarize him with Gothic: his mother hung ten full-page wood [engravings of medieval English cathedrals](#) on the walls of his bedroom. In the 1910 portfolio of his work for Berlin, he issued an appeal for a [spiritual mobilization](#), calling the "[feeling for the organic character of form](#) and treatment the Gothic spirit, for it was more completely realized in the forms of that architecture, perhaps, than any other."

In his later years, the designer still believed firmly that "[Gothic architecture approached the organic](#) in character." He pictured skyscrapers as fulfilling for the landscape of his contemporary America one of the same functions that cathedrals had served in medieval Europe—as lighthouses within small cities. The [first tall office tower](#) designed by Wright was the Larkin Company Administration Building, devised in 1903 and built between 1904 and 1906 for the soap company by the same name in Buffalo, New York. Demolished in 1950, its five stories in red brick centered upon a nave-like skylit court that prompted a prominent architectural historian to describe the construction as "an industrial cathedral that should have [delighted Viollet-le-Duc](#)." This result was in keeping with [the American architect's conception of urban planning](#), which only flirted with skyscraper metropolises. Only one skyscraper by Wright was

realized, the nineteen-story Price Tower. This multi-use edifice, conceived as a tree-like trunk from which the floors jut out like branches, was built in 1956 in Bartlesville, Oklahoma. Between 1936 and 1939, a structure with a vertical orientation was constructed by him in Racine, Wisconsin. Known as the S.C. Johnson Administrative Complex, the portion intended as the headquarters features dendriform columns. A later addition was the fourteen-story Research Tower, in which laboratories are grouped around a central core that Wright conceived as a taproot. Did the arboreal aspects of these two tall buildings owe anything to Gothic?

In domestic architecture Wright created, after his own fashion, a [Tudor revival home](#) for Nathan Moore in Oak Park. Elsewhere, the architect incorporated homage to Carpenter Gothic into the design of brackets beneath the eaves and even more into that of the [flattened ogival mullions](#) in windows at the Auldbrass Plantation in Yemassee, South Carolina (see Fig. 6.72). In ecclesiastical architecture too, the designer evidenced Goth proclivities. In the Wayfarers Chapel in Palos Verdes, California, he echoed ogees even more ostentatiously than he had in the domestic architecture of the Southern mansion (see Fig. 6.73). [The last church Wright designed](#) was Pilgrim Congregational Church in Redding, California. He referred to its style as "[Pole and Boulder Gothic](#)." By that phrase he intended to evoke both the shape of a tent, and a Gothic church (see Fig. 6.74). In sum, he appreciated the versatility and fluidity of Gothic. In fact, he supposedly went so far as to coin the term "Cherokee Gothic" to describe the architecture of the University of Oklahoma at Norman. This manner fuses conventional Gothic with elements influenced by native Americans. It merges two styles that share primitivism and polish.



Fig. 6.72 Living room of Frank Lloyd Wright's Auldbrass Plantation, Yemassee, SC. Photograph, date and photographer unknown. Washington, DC, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.



Fig. 6.73 Frank Lloyd Wright's Wayfarers Chapel, Palos Verdes, CA. Photograph by Bruce Boehner, 2014, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Wayfarers.3.JPG>, CC BY-SA 3.0.



Fig. 6.74 Frank Lloyd Wright's Pilgrim Congregational Church, Redding, CA. Photograph by G. E. Kidder Smith, 1960. Image courtesy of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, MA. CC BY-SA 3.0.

Funded by oligarchs, collegiate Gothic was built to house the young of the elite as they acquired the additional gloss of college after the earlier sheen of finishing school or prep school. The structures were also erected as a counterbalance to the specialization of a German educational model that emphasized advanced research and graduate study. The very purposes and arrangements of their construction put the accent upon undergraduates and upon the value of cohabitation and proximity to professors for their charisma as role models. In some cases, the campuses that resulted may have expressed an ambition for fame and immortality by perpetuating their donors' names across time; in other instances, they may have been attempts to expiate guilt, a desire to repent and achieve redemption for ill-gotten gains. But altruism need not always be

subverted by belated or mixed motivations. Many people, both haves and have-nots, experience yearning to do good and joy in sharing.

The raising of the collegiate Gothic campuses did not coincide in every instance with the academic high tide of their institutions. In most cases, the best intellectual times had not yet arrived. The betterment to come before, during, and after the entry of the United States into World War II owed partly to the influx of emigrants from the self-inflicted dismantlement of Europe's establishments of higher learning during the "hot" war itself and to a slower brain drain in the long cold war that followed it. Another reason for the buoyancy of American universities was the broadened access of previously disadvantaged groups that the [GI Bill](#) of 1944 inaugurated and that continued as further legislation and policies were put in place. For a spell of a few decades, meritocracy was not merely theory but (with notable and dishonorable exceptions) common practice. At the same time, the architectural style was not a relic of a worse past that was superseded. Rather, it helped to make the precincts of colleges treasured havens of stability in which to conduct those experiments.

Among the various anachronistic revivals, collegiate Gothic may have been the most successful. But all the renewals have evolved into the eclecticism that characterizes the choice of contemporary architecture on campuses nationwide. The diversity can be compelling, but it can also lapse into the stochastic staleness of a strip mall, in which one brand name is juxtaposed to another. Their practicality is not assured without exception even now, and the true test within the chronology of universities will require a century to judge.

The now hoary contention that structure must reveal functionality has been mostly discarded. Those who live in the buildings that emerge these days are justified in wondering how the styles fit together, and how the forms are justified for the functions to which they are to be put. These same questions led to the downfall of Gothic. By the same token, they could cause it and other historicizing fashions to be resurrected and reshaped and to displace what now reigns supreme. The world has ridden a stylistic merry-go-round going back centuries, and in some cases millennia. Some manners are likelier than others to be resuscitated. Gothic may be ready for defibrillation. Skyscraper Gothic may not be aberrant, some sort of cul-de-sac within the Darwinism of American urbanism. On the contrary, the manner is iconic (and often iconographic too).

Tall Gothic is found elsewhere. In India, the Rajabai Clock Tower has embellished the Fort campus of the University of Mumbai since its completion in 1878: the look of this architecture has been designated as [Bombay Gothic](#) (see Figs. 6.75 and 6.76). While incorporating features of early Indo-Islamic, the edifice is modeled freely upon Big Ben in London. The structure weds two types of cultural imperialism or cultural hegemony, the one stylistic and the other chronometric, both implanting the values and technology of Europe upon the Indian subcontinent. Gothic was global or at least globe-trotting in the way best known to the imperialism and colonialism of the nineteenth century. The sun never set on the British Empire—or on its Gothic.





Fig. 6.75 Construction of Rajabai Clock Tower, University of Mumbai, Mumbai. Photograph, ca. 1870–1878. Photographer unknown, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Rajabai\\_under\\_Const.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Rajabai_under_Const.jpg)

For the moment, the ultramodern high-rises and campuses of Dubai and Shanghai make no gestures toward the Westernizing aesthetics of colonial-era Gothic revival or of any conceivable later iteration of it, but the day may come. We may yet see collegiate quadrangles replicated in deserts halfway across the world, because new nations have stridden onto the world stage with the ambition to acquire instant pasts—but it seems likelier that the pasts they will seek will differ than that newfangled medieval will suddenly become chic.

Whatever verdict we reach upon collegiate Gothic as architecture or as a manifestation of the *zeitgeist* pandemic in its glory days, the style will be with us for a long time to come as a concomitant of education at many highly-regarded and -rated universities. Consequently, many future leaders in business, government, learning, and culture will associate college, where at least in the happiest cases they will have spent one of the freest and most creative phases in their lives, with the *collegiate Gothic environs* in which they studied, ate, and slept. The campus style of Gothicism is hardly the only architectural means of demarcating college life to partition it from the hustle and bustle, and materialism, of existence afterward. Still, it has been a good one among many or even *primus inter pares*. It has become an essential component

within the cultural patrimony that makes the United States what it has been and what it remains.

The campus stands not a full world apart—but at least a part of one apart—from the realities outside it. If not helped to stay a little aloof, it could melt into the world. That would be a loss for both the world and it. There is no shame in a measure of apartness. As many believe, Eden once had it, and paradise still does. Solitary confinement is spiteful, but even the best teamwork usually requires single members to isolate themselves sometimes for the sake of completing tasks and to create. We need the single names of poets and novelists every jot as much as we need the interminable credit lines that unscroll when the action of the main film has concluded.



Fig. 6.76 Rajabai Clock Tower, University of Mumbai, Mumbai. Photograph by Nikhil Kulkarni, 2009, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rajabai\\_Clock\\_Tower,\\_Mumbai\\_\(31\\_August\\_2008\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rajabai_Clock_Tower,_Mumbai_(31_August_2008).jpg), CC BY-SA 3.0.

The jongleur thought that becoming a monk would earn him his ticket to redemption, but the conventions of monasticism turned out not to save him. In the end, he demarcated himself from both his past and his present by doffing his habit. Still, it was inside the oblong confines of a monastery that he did his best outside the box. By creating his own intersection between very separate subcultures, he won heaven.

Worse ways exist of reaching worse outcomes than juggling or tumbling beneath a pointed arch in hope of attaining salvation. Let us now see how in the early twentieth century the tale of the jongleur gained new hardiness, thanks first to a composer and second to a diva.

# Notes

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*Day by day America drifts farther & farther away from Europe.* Charles Eliot Norton, Letter to Henry James, December 5, 1873, Harvard Library, bMS Am 1094 (379).

## Notes to Chapter 1

### Adams Family

*Who we are is who we were.* The line is spoken by John Quincy Adams in the film *Amistad*, directed by Steven Spielberg and released in 1997. It does not appear in the published transcript of the trial. An inference might be that who we are as well as who we were is contingent upon who later people say we are and were.

*wealthy and prestigious.* One of his brothers, Charles Francis Adams Jr., headed the Union Pacific Railway from 1884 to 1890.

*waning.* For example, his father fell out of favor during the administration of Ulysses S. Grant, and his brother was ousted (railroaded out?) from the top position at Union Pacific.

*the Athens of America.* Thomas H. O'Connor, *The Athens of America: Boston, 1825–1845* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2006).

*serving as an envoy.* More precisely, Minister Plenipotentiary.

*I must study Politicks and War.* Letter to Abigail (“Portia”) Adams, without date, 1780, in L. H. Butterfield and Marc Friedlaender, eds., *Adams Family Correspondence*, 12 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1973–2013), vol. 3. Online at *Adams Family Papers: An Electronic Archive* (Massachusetts Historical Society), <http://www.masshist.org/digitaladams>

*Jean-Baptiste de La Curne de Sainte-Palaye*. Lionel Gossman, *Medievalism and the Ideologies of the Enlightenment: The World and Work of La Curne de Sainte-Palaye* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press, 1968).

*a mire of failings*. *Essai sur les mœurs et l'esprit des nations et sur les principaux faits de l'histoire depuis Charlemagne jusqu'à Louis XIII*, 2 vols. (Paris: Garnier frères, 1963), 2: 10: "Les mœurs ne furent pas meilleurs ni en France, ni en Angleterre, ni en Allemagne, ni dans le Nord. La barbarie, la superstition, l'ignorance couvraient la face du monde, excepté en Italie" ("Morals were not better in France, England, Germany, or in the North. Barbarism, superstition, and ignorance covered the face of the world, except in Italy").

*last and greatest deity of all*. Henry Adams, *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres* (henceforth MSMC), chap. 11 "The Three Queens," in idem, *Novels, Mont Saint Michel, The Education*, ed. Ernest Samuels and Jayne N. Samuels (New York: Library of America, 1983), 523.

*desacralized*. Adams, MSMC, 523.

### Great Scott! Sir Walter

*Will our posterity understand*. *Hours in a Library* (London: Smith, Elder, 1907), 1: 186–229, at 187, originally published as "Hours in a Library, No. 3: Some Words about Sir Walter Scott," *The Cornhill Magazine* 24 (September 1871): 278–93, cited by John Henry Raleigh, "What Scott Meant to the Victorians," *Victorian Studies* 7.1 (1963): 7–34, at 7.

*peaches and pears*. In what is likelier coincidence than literary allusion, Adams specifies pears, which a millennium and a half earlier in the *Confessions*, Augustine had professed guiltily to having stolen in his own youth. Henry Adams, *The Education of Henry Adams* (henceforth EHA), chap. 2, "Boston (1848–1854)," 755. Here Adams lists in reverse chronological order Scott's first and second medieval-themed novels, respectively, the 1820 *Ivanhoe* and the 1823 *Quentin Durward*. *The Talisman*, from 1825, also set in the Middle Ages, is the second of the Scottish author's "Tales of the Crusaders" subseries from within the Waverley Novels.

*Gothic generation*. Walter Scott, *The Antiquary*, ed. Nicola Watson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 150.

*tilt at a ring*. Leon Howard, *Victorian Knight-Errant: A Study of the Early Literary Career of James Russell Lowell* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1952), 5. On Lowell's early and thorough exposure to Scott, see pp. 4, 5, 6, 25, 28, 40.

*carousel*. Barbara Bell, "The Performance of Victorian Medievalism," in *Beyond Arthurian Romances: The Reach of Victorian Medievalism*, ed. Lorretta M. Holloway and Jennifer A. Palmgren (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 191–216, at 210–11. For



the time being the definitive treatment remains Frederick Fried, *A Pictorial History of the Carousel* (New York: A. S. Barnes, 1978).

*knights astraddle steeds*. The Italian term for carousel is overtly the word for jousting: *giostra*, cognate with *joust*. These words derive ultimately from a Latin verb meaning to bring near or together, from *iuxta* “near.”

*no one escaped Scott-free*. On the contribution of Scott to the medieval revival, see Alice Chandler, *A Dream of Order: The Medieval Ideal in Nineteenth-Century English Literature* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1970), 12–51 (“Origins of Medievalism: Scott”). On the obsolescence of his oeuvre since the twentieth century, see Ann Rigney, *The Afterlives of Walter Scott: Memory on the Move* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). On his influence in Europe, see Murray Pittock, ed., *The Reception of Sir Walter Scott in Europe*, Athlone Critical Traditions Series: The Reception of British Authors in Europe, vol. 13 (London: Continuum, 2006).

*Scott-ish*. Although Scott’s novels have plummeted from sight like a large rock to the bottom of a lake, ripples of his medievaese continue to radiate from the dropping point. In my view we owe partly, although ever more obliquely, to Scott the frequency of some odd vocabulary, morphology, and syntax in historical fiction today. On such language (but without consideration of Scott), see Miriam Youngerman Miller, “‘Thy Speech Is Strange and Uncouth’: Language in the Children’s Historical Novel of the Middle Ages,” *Children’s Literature* 23 (1995): 71–90.

*impressions of the Middle Ages*. The English adjective *medieval* is first attested in 1817. Although the attestation does not appear in a text composed by Scott, it owes indirectly to the vogue for the period that more than anyone else of his day he helped to instigate in the English-speaking world.

The first documented use (spelled *mediæval*) is by an antiquarian, Thomas Dudley Fosbroke (1770–1842), in *British Monachism; or, Manners and Customs of the Monks and Nuns of England: To Which Are Added I. Peregrinatorium Religiosum: or, Manners and Customs of Ancient Pilgrims. II. The Consuetudinal of Anchorets and Hermits. III. Some Account of the Continentes, or Persons Who Had Made Vows of Chastity. IV. Four Select Poems in Various Styles*, 2nd ed. (London: J. Nichols, 1817), vi: “he professes to illustrate mediæval customs upon mediæval principles, from a persuasion, that contemporary ideas are requisite to the accurate elucidation of history.” On this usage, see David Matthews, *Medievalism: A Critical History* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2015), 52, and especially David Matthews, “From Mediaeval to Mediaevalism: A New Semantic History,” *The Review of English Studies*, n.s. 62 (2011): 695–715. Without reference to this specific passage, see Clare A. Simmons, “Medievalism: Its Linguistic History in Nineteenth-Century Britain,” *Studies in Medievalism* 17 (2009): 28–35.

*throughout the United States*. William H. Pierson Jr., *American Buildings and Their Architects: Technology and the Picturesque, The Corporate and the Early Gothic Styles*, *American Buildings and Their Architects*, vol. 2.1 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1978), 290–91.

*the romances of courts and castles*. Quoted by Mark Zwonitzer, *The Statesman and the Storyteller: John Hay, Mark Twain, and the Rise of American Imperialism* (Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books, 2016), 178–79 (with coverage also of Mark Twain's views on Scott).

*taste for medievaesque horror*. In turn, their outpourings initiated a tradition of literary criticism upon this undertow of the Gothic revival that remains alive to this day. See Peter Sabor, "Medieval Revival and the Gothic," in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, vol. 4, *The Eighteenth Century*, ed. H. B. Nisbet and Claude Rawson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 470–88.

*historicizing realism*. Elizabeth Fay, *Romantic Medievalism: History and the Romantic Literary Ideal* (Houndmills, UK: Palgrave, 2002), 71–78.

*Eglinton Tournament*. The competition was staged in Eglinton in Ayrshire, in the west of Scotland.

*This mass spectacle*. The literature on this event is substantial. For a contemporary account, see James Aikman, *An Account of the Tournament at Eglinton, Revised and Corrected by Several of the Knights*, illus. W. Gordon (Edinburgh, UK: H. Paton, Carver and Gilder, 1839), <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/100234865>. For a twentieth-century analysis, see Ian Anstruther, *The Knight and the Umbrella: An Account of the Eglinton Tournament, 1839* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1963). More recently, see Bell, "Performance of Victorian Medievalism," 200–204; Albert D. Pionke, "A Ritual Failure: The Eglinton Tournament, the Victorian Medieval Revival, and Victorian Ritual Culture," *Studies in Medievalism* 16 (2008): 25–45; Paul Pickering, "'Hark ye back to the age of valour': Re-Enacting Chivalry from the Eglinton Tournament to Kill Streak," in *Chivalry and the Medieval Past*, ed. Katie Stevenson and Barbara Gribling (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell, 2016), 198–214. Historical pageants had been held earlier elsewhere, notably from 1826 on in Bavaria: see Stephen Brockmann, *Nuremberg: The Imaginary Capital* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2006), 52.

*Scott's fictions*. R. Aaron Rottner, "The Lay of the Last Minstrel," in *Medieval Art in America: Patterns of Collecting, 1800–1940*, ed. Elizabeth Bradford Smith (University Park: Palmer Museum of Art, Pennsylvania State University, 1996), 66–69, at 69.

*Mark Twain*. For the broadest comparison of the two, see Kim Moreland, *The Medievalist Impulse in American Literature: Twain, Adams, Fitzgerald, and Hemingway* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1996), 77–117, especially 77–80.

*The Sir Walter Disease*. Mark Twain, *Life on the Mississippi*, in idem, *Mississippi Writings* (New York: Library of America, 1982), 217–616, at 501. On medievalism in another of Twain's works, see David L. Vanderwerken, "The Triumph of Medievalism in 'Pudd'nhead Wilson,'" *Mark Twain Journal* 18.4 (1977): 7–11.

*The South has not yet recovered*. Twain, *Life on the Mississippi*, 468.

*Richard M. Upjohn*. The son of the similarly named Gothic revivalist Richard Upjohn, without the middle initial M. On the father, see Stephen McNair, "Richard Upjohn and the Gothic Revival in Antebellum Alabama," in A. W. N. Pugin's *Global Influence: Gothic Revival Worldwide*, ed. Timothy Brittain-Catlin, Jan De Maeyer, and Martin Bressani, KADOC-Artes, vol. 16 (Leuven, Belgium: Leuven University Press, 2016), 106–17.

*the novelist had built*. The architect was Edward Tuckerman Potter.

*Keeping school in a castle*. Twain, *Life on the Mississippi*, 469.

*instinctive comprehension and genius*. Letter to Ward Thoron, February 20, 1911, in *LHA*, 6: 416.

*I wish Walter Scott were alive*. Letter to Charles Milnes Gaskell, August 7, 1913, in *Letters of Henry Adams, 1858–1918*, ed. Worthington Chauncey Ford, 2 vols. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1930–1938), <https://archive.org/details/lettersofhenryad028297mbp>, 2: 615.

## Gothic Harvard

*In my sublimated fancy*. Letter to Elizabeth Cameron, August 3, 1896, in *LHA*, 4: 410–13, at 412.

*Gilded Age*. Mark Twain and Charles Dudley Warner, *The Gilded Age: A Tale of Today* (Hartford, CT: American Publishing Company, 1873).

*concurrence rather than coincidence*. The phrase is drawn from Tony Tanner, "The Lost America—The Despair of Henry Adams and Mark Twain," in idem, *Scenes of Nature, Signs of Men*, Cambridge Studies in American Literature and Culture, vol. 31 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 79–93, at 79. Tanner makes no reference to their views on the Middle Ages. For contrasts, see Moreland, *Medievalist Impulse*, 77–78, 87–88, 101–2.

*academic pursuit of the Middle Ages*. William Courtenay, "The Virgin and the Dynamo: The Growth of Medieval Studies in America (1870–1930)," in *Medieval Studies in North America: Past, Present and Future*, ed. Francis G. Gentry and Christopher Kleinhenz (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1982), 5–22.

*purpose-built of granite*. From a design by Richard Bond.

*copy of the chapel of King's College.* *The Bostonians* (1886), chap. 2. The lapidary likeness has long since disappeared, along with the card catalogue that James describes.

*deep impression.* Gore Hall must have been if not an inspiration, then at least a Gothic gadfly to Yale College. In New Haven, Connecticut, the loosely comparable Dwight Hall and Chapel preserve what was once the library, built between 1842 and 1847, designed by Henry Austin and Andrew Jackson Davis, in association with Ithiel Town (see Fig. n.1). See James F. O'Gorman, *Henry Austin: In Every Variety of Architectural Style* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2008), 122–30.



Fig. n.1 Dwight Hall, Yale University, New Haven, CT. Photograph by Ned Goode, 1964. Washington, DC, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

*wedding of the picturesque and the Gothic.* Michael Charlesworth, “The Ruined Abbey: Picturesque and Gothic Values,” in *The Politics of the Picturesque: Literature, Landscape, and Aesthetics since 1770*, ed. Stephen Copley and Peter Garside (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 62–80.

*president of Harvard.* He held office from that year until 1849.

*the Yard.* The connotations of the noun as it has become frozen in the expression Harvard Yard, deserve close examination. A yard is often but not always enclosed. It is cognate with “garden.” How a “yard” in the Harvardian sense overlaps with “campus” elsewhere in the terminology applied to American colleges and universities should be teased out.

*First Parish Church.* Then called the Meeting House, across Massachusetts Avenue from Johnson Gate. This iteration of the Unitarian Meeting House was the fifth, built in 1833.

*Carpenter Gothic*. The wooden structure featured a façade turreted and punctuated by lancets. In other decoration, the exterior boasted intricate hook-shaped ornaments known as crockets, distinctive finials to adorn elements that projected upward, and the elaborately carved boards known as bargeboards or vergeboards that hang from the projecting ends of roofs.

*Appleton Chapel*. Its name alone lives on, appropriated for the chancel of today's Memorial Church, the utterly dissimilar building that replaced the original.

*high-wheeled bicycle*. This type of two-wheeler is also known as a penny-farthing.

*His father*. The Reverend Dr. Charles Lowell.

*altering his name*. Howard, *Victorian Knight-Errant*, vii.

*The Vision of Sir Launfal*. Howard, *Victorian Knight-Errant*, 272.

*the Middle Ages was an age of faith*. Chandler, *Dream of Order*, 235. On Lowell's medievalism, see Howard, *Victorian Knight-Errant*.

*satirized a craftsman*. James Russell Lowell, "The Unhappy Lot of Mr. Knott," *Graham's Magazine* 38 (April 1851): 281–87, quoted in part by Loth and Sandler, *Only Proper Style*, 99.

*preindustrial Germany*. Adams, *EHA*, chap. 6, "Rome (1859–1860)," 976.

*The Cathedral*. The original is preserved as James Russell Lowell, Holograph, The Cathedral, Special Collections, Concord Free Public Library, Concord, MA.

*published conjointly*. In the "Vest-Pocket Series of Standard and Popular Authors."

*the composition*. The full title of the ode is "The Ode Recited at the Commemoration of the Living and Dead Soldiers of Harvard University, July 21, 1865." *The Cathedral; and the Harvard Commemoration Ode* (Boston: James R. Osgood, 1877).

*School of Fine Arts*. In French, École des Beaux-Arts.

*pilgrimage*. The anecdote is recounted in Charles Moore, *Daniel H. Burnham; Architect, Planner of Cities*, 2 vols. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1921), 2: 67.

*no age to get cathedrals built*. Lowell, "The Cathedral," line 524.

*the individual was a facet of Boston*. Letter to Henry James, November 18, 1903, in *LHA*, 5: 524.

*hub of the solar system*. He used the phrase in an article, which appeared in *Atlantic Monthly* 1.6 (April 1858): 734–44, at 734. The article was one of a series, "The Autocrat of



the Breakfast Table." The columns were reprinted later as *The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table* (Boston: Phillips, Sampson, 1861), chap. 6.

*Mont Saint Michel and Chartres*. Henry Adams, *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres* (Washington, DC: Privately printed, 1904). The first place name is often rendered as *Mont-Saint-Michel*. The Library of America edition holds that the title should be without the hyphens, as it was in both the original printing of 1904 and the reedition of 1911 that Adams oversaw directly: see Adams, *MSMC*, 1219. The hyphens appeared first in the trade edition by Ralph Adams Cram.

*education the schools could not give*. Ralph Adams Cram, *My Life in Architecture* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1936), 145.

*a historical romance of the year 1200*. Letter to Elizabeth Cameron, April 27, 1902, in *LHA*, 5: 378–81, at 378.

*fertility idols*. See also Kim Moreland, "Henry Adams, the Medieval Lady, and the 'New Woman,'" *Clio* 18 (1989): 291–305, at 294–95.

*Madonna and Child with Saints*. Purchased from Artaud de Montor. See Elizabeth Bradford Smith, "The Earliest Private Collectors: *False Dawn* Multiplied," in idem, *Medieval Art in America*, 23–33, at 26–28.

*collections of Italian primitives*. Smith, "Earliest Private Collectors," 29.

*The Medieval Mind*. Reissued at least once a decade until the 1980s.

*French*. Henry Adams, *Mont-Saint-Michel et Chartres*, trans. Georges Fradier and Jacques Brosse (Paris: Laffont, 1955).

## Photographic Memory

*mention of a Kodak*. Adams, *MSMC*, Preface, in *Novels*, 341.

*predecessors*. Anthony Hamber, "The Use of Photography by Nineteenth Century Art Historians," *Visual Resources* 7.2–3 (1990): 135–61.

*image-based analysis*. *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, vol. 8 of *The Works of John Ruskin*, ed. E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, 39 vols. (London: George Allen, 1903–1912), "Preface to the Second Edition [1855]," 7–14, at 13: "The Gothic of Verona is far nobler than that of Venice; and that of Florence nobler than that of Verona. For our own immediate purposes that of Notre-Dame of Paris is noblest of all; and the greatest service which can at present be rendered to architecture, is the careful delineation of details of the cathedrals above named, by means of photography."

*daguerreotypes*. Karen Burns, “Topographies of Tourism: ‘Documentary’ Photography and *The Stones of Venice*,” *Assemblage* 32 (1997): 22–44. See also Michael Harvey, “Ruskin and Photography,” *Oxford Art Journal* 7 (1985): 25–33.

*Amiens cathedral*. Mark B. Pohlad, “William Morris, Photography, and Frederick H. Evans,” *History of Photography* 22.1 (1998): 52–59.

*diagrams*. These drawings are on pp. 107–13 (1904) and 108–14 (1912).

*1913 reprint*. This reprint was for the American Institute of Architects. It contains twelve illustrations in addition to a colored frontispiece.

*photo-phobia*. Letter to Elizabeth Cameron, September 8, 1891, in *LHA*, 3: 540–49, at 547.

*plaster casts*. James K. McNutt, “Plaster Casts after Antique Sculpture: Their Role in the Elevation of Public Taste and in American Art Instruction,” *Studies in Art Education* 31 (1990): 158–67.

*niece*. For the avuncular relationship in a literal sense, see Abigail Adams Homans, *Education by Uncles* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1966).

*carry a camera*. Kim Moreland, “The Photo Killeth: Henry Adams on Photography and Painting,” *Papers on Language and Literature* 27 (1991): 356–70, at 370.

*as a generic term*. The name of this all-American product related to the Dakota Territory—later admitted into the Union as North and South Dakota—where the device was invented by a Scottish immigrant: see Mina Fisher Hammer, *History of the Kodak and Its Continuations: The First Folding and Panoramic Cameras. Magic Lantern—Kodak—Movie* (New York: Pioneer Publications, 1940), 17, 46.

In that final decade of the nineteenth century, *snapshot* and *Kodak* become documented words for “photograph,” as were *snaphottist* and *Kodaker* for “photographer.” See Christian Kay et al., *Historical Thesaurus of the Oxford English Dictionary*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 1: 1731, 03.11.03.02.10.02 (n.) *photograph* (with snap alongside snapshot and Kodak) and 03.11.03.02.10.01 (n.) *photographer* (with snapshooter, snapshotter, and Kodakist among the additional forms attested).

*medium of scholarly record*. “The third figure is a queen, charming as a woman, but particularly well-dressed, and with details of ornament and person elaborately wrought; worth drawing, if one could only draw; worth photographing with utmost care to include the strange support on which she stands: a monkey, two dragons, a dog, a basilisk with a dog’s head” (chap. 5, “Towers and Portals,” in Adams, *MSMC*, 410).

*Monuments Historiques*. National Historical Sites of France.

*having in hand photos.* For example, “If you have any doubts about this, you have only to compare the photograph of Coutances with the photograph of Chartres” (chap. 4, “Normandy and the Île de France,” in Adams, *MSMC*, 387); also, “One can hardly call it a device; it is so simple and evident a piece of construction that it does not need to be explained; yet you will have to carry a photograph of this flèche to Chartres, and from there to Vendome [*sic*], for there is to be a great battle of flèches about this point of junction, and the Norman scheme is a sort of standing reproach to the French” (ibid., 389); and finally, “This long panegyric, by Viollet-le-Duc, on French taste at the expense of Norman temper, ought to be read, book in hand, before the Cathedral of Rouen, with photographs of Bayeux to compare” (ibid., 392).

*systematic archives.* Cases in point would be: “The central clocher will begin a photographic collection of square towers, to replace that which was lost on the Mount” (ibid., 388); “Your photographs of Bayeux or Boscherville or Secqueville will show you at a glance whether the term ‘adresse’ applies to them” (chap. 5, “Towers and Portals,” in ibid., 400); “Any photograph shows that the Auxerre spire is also simple” (ibid., 401).

*his intimate friend Elizabeth Cameron.* Adams, Letter to Elizabeth Cameron, October 23, 1899, in *LHA*, 5: 49–52, at 51.

*a few quick verbal brushstrokes.* Homans, *Education by Uncles*, 142.

*armchair travel.* Bernd Stiegler, *Traveling in Place: A History of Armchair Travel*, trans. Peter Filkins (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

*its first documented use.* The first attestation of the saying has been ascribed to Alphonse Karr (1808–1890), in an epigram in *Les Guêpes* (January 1849), a monthly he edited.

## Reluctant Professor

*History of the United States.* Henry Adams, *History of the United States during the First Administration of Thomas Jefferson to the Second Administration of James Madison* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1889–1891), <https://archive.org/details/cu31924092892631>

*as he had been in 1870.* He confessed to Elizabeth Cameron: “It belongs to the me of 1870; a strangely different being from the me of 1890.” See Adams, Letter to Elizabeth Cameron, February 6, 1891, in *LHA*, 3: 402–10, at 408.

*Another of the author’s motivations.* The best introduction to this massive and complex work is Garry Wills, *Henry Adams and the Making of America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2005). On Adams’s historical consciousness specifically regarding the Middle Ages, see Hans Rudolf Guggisberg, *Das europäische Mittelalter im amerikanischen Geschichtsdenken des 19. und des frühen 20. Jahrhunderts*, Basler Beiträge zur Geschichtswissenschaft, vol.

92 (Basel, Switzerland: Helbing und Lichtenhahn, 1964), 65–76 (on his involvement with Anglo-Saxon law), 113–36 (on both him and his brother Brooks).

*I will appoint him.* Adams, *EHA*, chap. 19, “Chaos (1870),” 988.

*utterly and grossly ignorant.* Adams, Letter to Charles Milnes Gaskell, September 29, 1870, in *LHA*, 2: 81–82, at 81.

*Antwerp.* Adams, *EHA*, chap. 5, “Berlin (1858–1859),” 787–88: “The thirteenth-century cathedral towered above a sixteenth-century mass of tiled roofs, ending abruptly in walls and a landscape that had not changed. The taste of the town was thick, rich, ripe, like a sweet wine; it was mediaeval, so that Rubens seemed modern; it was one of the strongest and fullest flavors that ever touched the young man’s palate; but he might as well have drunk out his excitement in old Malmsey, for all the education he got from it. Even in art, one can hardly begin with Antwerp Cathedral and the Descent from the Cross. He merely got drunk on his emotions, and had then to get sober as he best could. He was terribly sober when he saw Antwerp half a century afterwards.”

*Failure.* Adams, *EHA*, chap. 20, “Failure (1871),” 993–1006.

## Five of Hearts

*Marian Hooper Adams.* Taking her published letters as a representative indicator of her name use, we find that in instances when she signed any name at all, she called herself Marian or “M.A.” sixty-eight percent of the time, with an increase over her life. But the surge could signify more correspondence outside her circle of intimates. See Marian Hooper Adams, *The Letters of Mrs. Henry Adams, 1865–1883*, ed. Ward Thoron (Boston: Little, Brown, 1936), part 1 (total 0/0); part 2 (total 0/3—July–November 1872 = 0/14, November 1872–March 1873 = 0/8, March–July 1873 = 0/9); part 3 (total 20/30—June–August 1879 = 10/12, August–October 1879 = 4/7, October–December 1879 = 6/11); part 4 (total 101/116—October 1880–May 1881 = 30/38, October 1881–June 1882 = 38/44, October 1882–May 1883 = 33/34).

*first in each other’s company.* Otto Friedrich, *Clover* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1979), 73.

*her Grand Tour.* Natalie Dykstra, *Clover Adams: A Gilded and Heartbreaking Life* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2012), 48.

*they married.* Dykstra, *Clover Adams*, 55 (on the proposal), 59 (on the wedding and honeymoon).

*return voyage to America.* Dykstra, *Clover Adams*, 74.

*a touch of genius.* Henry James, Letter to Henry James Sr., October 11, 1879, in idem, *The Letters*, ed. Leon Edel, 4 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974–1984), 2: 257–60, at 258. The context of the phrase is worth quoting more fully for its Jamesian flavor: “Henry is very sensible, though a trifle dry, and Clover has a touch of genius (I mean as compared with the usual British Female).”

*The larger part.* It fronted on Sixteenth Street, across from Saint John’s Episcopal Church.

*five-year stint as a journalist.* Hay was with the *New-York Tribune* from 1870 to 1875. He also achieved modest fame as an author of ballads and a novel.

*he fathered five children by her.* Martha A. Sandweiss, *Passing Strange: A Gilded Age Tale of Love and Deception across the Color Line* (New York: Penguin, 2009). All of this he kept secret from others in his life, most particularly his mother in Newport. Of the four offspring who survived to become adults, the two daughters married white men and were regarded as white themselves. The two sons were subsumed into the racial category then called Negro.

### Self-Made Medievalist

*The American mind might go back to Puritanism.* Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. Willard R. Trask, Bollingen Series, vol. 36 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), 587 (appendix, “The Medieval Bases of Western Thought,” a lecture delivered on July 3, 1949).

*Boylston Professor of Rhetoric and Oratory.* Donald M. Goodfellow, “The First Boylston Professor of Rhetoric and Oratory,” *New England Quarterly* 19.3 (1946): 372–89.

*brush up on his medieval history.* Adams, *EHA*, chap. 24, “Indian Summer (1898–1899),” 1057: “Solitude did what the society did not;—it forced and drove him into the study of his ignorance in silence. Here at last he entered the practice of his final profession. Hunted by *ennui*, he could no longer escape, and, by way of a summer school, he began a methodical survey,—a triangulation,—of the twelfth century.”

*rejection of institutionalized instruction.* Adams, Letter to Cecil Arthur Spring Rice, February 1, 1900, in *LHA*, 5: 80–83, at 83: “Twelfth-centurian that I am, I detest a university under all circumstances, and loathe science more than knowledge. Let us abolish Congress!”

*collective stagnation.* Adams, *EHA*, chap. 22, “Chicago (1893),” 1023: “Drifting in the dead-water of the *fin-de-siècle*,—and during this last decade everyone talked, and seemed to feel *fin-de-siècle*,—where not a breath stirred the idle air of education or fretted the mental torpor of self-content, one lived alone.”



*spalling and splintering*. Walter Laqueur, “Fin-de-Siècle: Once More with Feeling,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 31.1 (1996): 5–47, at 15: “The wholesome harmony of past ages could not be restored.”

*enthusiastic nostalgia*. Elizabeth Emery and Laura Morowitz, *Consuming the Past: The Medieval Revival in fin-de-siècle France* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2003), 4.

*religion and art*. Adams, Letter to Albert Stanburrough Cook, August 6, 1910, in *LHA*, 6: 356–57: “I wanted to show the intensity of the vital energy of a given time, and of course that intensity had to be stated in its two highest terms,—religion and art.” In *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres* itself, Adams avowed: “Religious art is the measure of human depth and sincerity” (chap. 16, “Saint Michiel de la Mer del Peril,” in Adams, *MSMC*, 346).

*had the half-title*. In its first and second private printings.

*North American Review*. The literary journal was edited by the art historian Charles Eliot Norton from 1864 to 1868.

*interplay*. To a considerable degree, his second and last novel, *Esther*, already deals with these interchanges. It was published under the pseudonym of Frances Snow Compton, in 1884, and identified only posthumously as Adams’s creation.

*The Law of Civilization and Decay*. Brooks Adams, *The Law of Civilization and Decay: An Essay on History* (New York: Macmillan & Co., 1895), <https://archive.org/details/lawofcivilizatio00adam>, and *America’s Economic Supremacy* (New York: Macmillan, 1900).

*alienated patrician*. Van Wyck Brooks, *The Wine of the Puritans: A Study of Present-Day America* (London: Sisley’s, 1908), <https://archive.org/details/cu31924028739443>, 135–36, describes the phenomenon as a close contemporary, which is analyzed decades later by Michael D. Clark, “Ralph Adams Cram and the Americanization of the Middle Ages,” *Journal of American Studies* 23 (1989): 195–213, at 196.

*the new church of St. John’s*. Samuels and Samuels, *Novels*, 187–91 (the opening scene), 1217 (on the textual history of the publication and authorship).

*real-life Trinity Church*. On the relationship between Saint John’s in Manhattan in the novel and Trinity in Boston in reality, see Charles Vandersee, “User: Henry Adams and *Esther*,” in *The Makers of Trinity Church in the City of Boston*, ed. James F. O’Gorman (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2004), 139–51, at 139–42.

*four-story brownstone*. At 91 Marlborough Street, at the corner of Marlborough and Clarendon Streets: see Dykstra, *Clover Adams*, 73.

*presumptions of familiarity*. Herbert L. Creek, "The Mediaevalism of Henry Adams," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 24 (1925): 86–97.

*failed to open his senses*. Adams, Letter to Mabel Hooper, September 1, 1895, in *LHA*, 4: 313–16, at 314. See also Adams, *EHA*, chap. 23, "Silence (1894–1898)," 1043: "If history had a chapter with which he thought himself familiar, it was the twelfth and thirteenth centuries; yet so little has labor to do with knowledge that these bare playgrounds of the lecture system turned into green and verdurous virgin forests merely through the medium of younger eyes and fresher minds." He does not restrain himself from referring to *virgin* forests.

*droll analogy*. Adams, Letter to Mabel Hooper, September 1, 1895, in *LHA*, 4: 313–316, at 315: "The squirming devils under the feet of the stone Apostles looked uncommonly like me and my generation."

*his character was rooted*. Adams, Letter to John Hay, September 7, 1895, in *LHA*, 4: 319–21, at 319–20: "I was a vassal of the Church; I held farms—for I was many—in the Cotentin and around Caen, but the thing I did by a great majority of ancestors was to help in building the cathedral of Coutances, and my soul is still built into it. I can almost remember the faith that gave me energy, and the scared boldness that made my towers seem to me so daring, with the bits of gracefulness that I hazarded with some doubts whether the divine grace could properly be shown outside. Within I had no doubts. There the contrite sinner was welcomed with such tenderness as makes me still wish I were one. There is not a stone in the whole interior which I did not treat as though it were my own child. I was not clever, and I made some mistakes which the great men of Amiens corrected. I was simple-minded, somewhat stiff and cold, almost repellant to the warmer natures of the south, and I had lived always where one fought handily and needed to defend one's wives and children; but I was at my best. Nearly eight hundred years have passed since I made the fatal mistake of going to England, and since then I have never done anything in the world that can begin to compare in the perfection of its spirit and art with my cathedral of Coutances. I am as sure of it all as I am of death."

*The Goths in New England*. George Perkins Marsh, *The Goths in New-England: A Discourse Delivered at the Anniversary of the Philomathesian Society of Middlebury College, August 15, 1843* (Middlebury, VT: Printed by J. Cobb, 1843), 14.

*Anglo-Saxons*. Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981). For a different and more recent approach to some of the same issues, see Laura Kendrick, "The American Middle Ages: Eighteenth-Century Saxonist Myth-Making," in *The Middle Ages after the Middle Ages in the English-Speaking World*, ed. Marie-Françoise Alamichel (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1997), 121–36.

*Across the Atlantic*. Chris Waters, “Marxism, Medievalism, and Popular Culture,” in *History and Community: Essays in Victorian Medievalism*, ed. Florence Boos (New York: Garland, 1992), 137–68.

*Henry Adams was led to northern France*. Curtius, *European Literature*, 587.

*The Normans*. Charles Homer Haskins, *The Normans in European History* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1915), 12. On Adams’s views on the Normans as a race, see William Dusing, *Henry Adams: The Myth of Failure* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1980), 203.

*John La Farge*. James L. Yarnall, *John La Farge: A Biographical and Critical Study* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2012).

*Already as an undergraduate*. La Farge studied at what would later become Fordham University.

*beauty of the medieval ideal*. Royal Cortissoz, *John La Farge: A Memoir and a Study* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1911), <https://archive.org/details/johnlafargememoi00cortrich>, 68.

*rival of Louis Comfort Tiffany*. Julie L. Sloan, “The Rivalry between Louis Comfort Tiffany and John La Farge,” *Nineteenth Century* 17 (1997): 27–34.

*printing it privately*. One hundred and fifty copies were printed in 1904, five hundred in 1912.

*an act of homage*. Adams, Letter to Elizabeth Cameron, February 8, 1903, in *LHA*, 5: 452–55, at 453: “My only hope of Heaven is the Virgin. If I tried to vulgarise her, and made her as cheap as cow-boy literature, I should ask for eternal punishment as a favor.”

*my great work on the Virgin*. Cited by Ernest Samuels, *Henry Adams* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1989), 354 (by mid-March of 1903 or 1904).

*The peril of the heavy tower*. Henry Adams, *MSMC*, 695 (chap. 16, “Saint Thomas Aquinas”).

*stayed in print*. A recent printed edition is the paperback *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989). The text is also available electronically. The standard edition is Adams, *MSMC*, 337–714. Adams adhered to the same, somewhat coy practice with his self-study, *The Education of Henry Adams*. He circulated the book privately from a limited print run that he brought out at his own expense in 1907, first in forty copies but later ratcheted up to one hundred. Only after his death in 1918 was the autobiography published commercially. In 1919, the book—considered to this day “one major work of enduring importance”—topped the list of nonfiction bestsellers. See Michael Korda, *Making the List: A Cultural History of the American Bestseller, 1900–1999* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 2001), 18, 32. *Education* was also posthumously awarded the Pulitzer Prize.

## Notes to Chapter 2

### The Nature of the Book

*literature of France in the Middle Ages*. Robert Manes, *Henry Adams on the Road to Chartres* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971), 153 (following Max Baym).

*earliest piece of French secular theater*. It was composed in 1282 or 1283.

*It was translated*. *Aucassin et Nicolette: Chantefable du douzième siècle*, trans. Alexandre Bida, ed. Gaston Paris (Paris: Hachette, 1878).

*lack of human passion*. Philip Henry Wicksteed, trans., *Our Lady's Tumbler* (Portland, ME: Thomas B. Mosher, 1900), viii–ix.

*the majesty of Chartres*. These are the last words of the chapter in *MSMC*, 604 (chap. 13, “Les Miracles de Notre Dame”): “If you can feel it, you can feel, without more assistance, the majesty of Chartres.”

*witnessed an evolution*. Ernst Scheyer, *The Circle of Henry Adams: Art and Artists* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1970), 111–13.

*antimodern modernist*. T. J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880–1920* (New York: Pantheon, 1981), 262–97, at 297 for “antimodern modernist.”

*the last word*. *MSMC*, 604 (chap. 13, “Les Miracles de Notre Dame”): “If you cannot feel the color and quality,—the union of *naïveté* and art,—the refinement,—the infinite delicacy and tenderness—of this little poem, then nothing will matter much to you.” This sentence leads directly into the closing statement about “the majesty of Chartres” quoted in the earlier note.

*toy house*. *MSMC*, 424 (chap. 6, “The Virgin of Chartres”): “To us, it is a child’s fancy; a toy-house to please the Queen of Heaven,—to please her so much that she would be happy in it,—to charm her till she smiled.”

*issued repeatedly*. Notably, there were printings in 1898, 1899, 1900, and 1904.

*the English came into print*. The English is Gaston Paris, *Mediaeval French Literature*, trans. Hannah Lynch (London: J. M. Dent, 1903); pp. 84–85 deal with *Our Lady's Tumbler*. The circumstances of the publication are recounted in the “Avertissement des éditeurs” with which the French edition opens: Gaston Paris, *Esquisse historique de la littérature française au Moyen Âge (depuis les origines jusqu'à la fin du XVe siècle)* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1907), <https://archive.org/details/esquissehistoriq00pari/vii>.

*the greatest academic authority in the world.* Max I. Baym, *The French Education of Henry Adams* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1951), 108.

*in his correspondence.* Letter to Ward Thoron, January 2, 1911, in *LHA*, 6: 401. On Paris without reference to the book specifically, see the letters to Raymond Weeks, February 16, 1912, and to Frederick Bliss Luquiens, April 8, 1912, in *ibid.*, 6: 508–11, at 508, and 529–31, at 530, respectively.

*his personal library.* Adams's own copy of the French *La littérature française au Moyen Âge* is held in the Massachusetts Historical Society, located in Boston. On the scoring, see Mane, *Henry Adams*, 157.

*philological items.* In an appendix, Baym, *French Education*, 291–301, catalogues other “philological items” known to have been in Adams's collection of French books; many are still extant.

*We can't grapple it.* Letter to Elizabeth Cameron, April 16, 1912, in *LHA*, 6: 534–35, at 535.

*attuned early.* Clover Adams, letter to Dr. Hooper, December 18, 1881, in *idem*, *Letters of Mrs. Henry Adams*, 310–14, at 313, cited by Dykstra, *Clover Adams*, 271.

*betrays an easy familiarity.* Letters to Sir Robert Cunliffe, October 19, 1897, to Mary Cadwalader Jones, August 15, 1912, and to Charles Milnes Gaskell, August 30, 1912, in *LHA*, 4: 490–91, at 491; 6: 550–51, at 550, and 6: 553–54, at 553, respectively.

*Adams's observation.* Adams would have heard through newspapers and word of mouth about Massenet's opera not long after its opening night in Monaco, but because Adams first published his book in 1904, he is highly unlikely to have seen a performance before he finished the writing. If he had read the libretto, he did not mention it in his correspondence.

## Madonna of Medieval France, La Dona of Washington

*hopes of enjoying intimacies.* Dykstra, *Clover Adams*, 215–19.

*his interactions with her.* In the meantime, she had other paramours. At least one of them was a much younger man known to him. Another, probably without his knowledge, was his close friend John Hay. John Taliaferro, *All the Great Prizes: The Life of John Hay, from Lincoln to Roosevelt* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2013), *passim*.

*decades.* Their correspondence ran from 1883 until his death in 1918.

*he read aloud to her.* Arline Boucher Tehan, *Henry Adams in Love: The Pursuit of Elizabeth Sherman Cameron* (New York: Universe, 1983), 206.



*wordplay*. On the relationship between Adams and Cameron, see Tehan, *Henry Adams in Love*, esp. p. 11 on the nickname. It punned affectionately on the Spanish title *doña*, the Italian *donna*, or both.

*would hardly have felt surprised*. Henry Adams, *Esther*, in idem, *Novels*, 222 (chap. 4). On the modeling, see Friedrich, *Clover*, 305. The place of Adams's wife in the same novel differed starkly, since the title character with whom she has been identified is described as having "nothing medieval about her." See Adams, *Esther*, in idem, *Novels*, 200 (chap. 1).

*superimposed his mental image*. Tehan, *Henry Adams in Love*, 208.

*an 1891 letter*. Letter to Elizabeth Cameron, November 5, 1891, in *LHA*, 3: 556–61, at 561: "As I grow older I see that all the human interest and power that religion ever had, was in the mother and child, and I would have nothing to do with a church that did not offer both. There you are again! you see how the thought always turns back to you."

*Madonna del Prato*. Known also as *Madonna del Belvedere*. The canvas depicts the Virgin with the Christ Child and John the Baptist. The depiction is commonly seen as reflecting the influence of Michelangelo. Alternatively, and not necessarily exclusively, the reference could point to Giovanni Bellini's work (1505) by the same title (see Fig. n.2).



Fig. n.2 Giovanni Bellini, *Madonna del Prato*, 1505. Oil on canvas, 67 × 86 cm. London, National Gallery, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Giovanni\\_bellini,\\_madonna\\_del\\_prato\\_01.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Giovanni_bellini,_madonna_del_prato_01.jpg)

*His Madonnas were prized.* David Alan Brown, *Raphael and America* (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1983).

*born to paint Madonnas.* Eugène Müntz, *Raphael: His Life, Works and Times*, trans. Walter Armstrong, 2nd ed. (London, 1888), 70.

*Madonna of the Chair.* In Italian, *Madonna della seggiola* or *Madonna della sedia*.

*people stand in worshipful silence.* *Transatlantic Sketches* (Boston: James R. Osgood, 1875), 293, quoted by Brown, *Raphael and America*, 25, who on p. 98n53 provides this and other citations on the high standing of Raphael's Madonnas in American culture at the time.

*Sistine Madonna.* Dykstra, *Clover Adams*, 63.

*buying craze.* Manfred J. Holler and Barbara Klose-Ullmann, "Art Goes America," *Journal of Economic Issues* 44.1 (2010): 89–112.

*depictions of the Virgin Mary.* Such as the *Madonna and Child Enthroned* donated by John Pierpont Morgan Jr. to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, or the *Small Cowper Madonna* given by Joseph E. Widener to the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC, in memory of his father P. A. B. Widener.

*craving to own a Raphael Madonna.* James Fenton, "Don't Take Our Raphael! (The 'Madonna of the Pinks')," *New York Review of Books* 49.20 (2002): 50–52.

*Giovanni Battista Salvi da Sassoferrato.* Known to his contemporaries as "painter of Virgins," he is now often called simply by his place of origin, Sassoferrato. See Cecilia Prete, ed., *Sassoferrato, Pictor Virginum: Nuovi studi e documenti per Giovan Battista Salvi* (Ancona, Italy: Il lavoro editoriale, 2010). The painting, acquired by Hay in Europe in 1890, has been in the Saint Louis Art Museum since 1961.

*round in format.* Such a circular painting is technically called *tondo*.

*religious rest.* Letter to John Hay, August 20, 1899, in *LHA*, 5: 14–16, at 14.

*returned repeatedly.* In the summer of 1900, he crowed to his brother Brooks about leading "a hermit's life, intellectually in the twelfth century, and corporeally in no recognized division of time." Letter to Brooks Adams, July 29, 1900, in *LHA*, 5: 142–44, at 143. In the autumn, he reported in a letter to Hay that he fancied himself "a twelfth-century monk in a nineteenth-century attic, in Paris" and "a monk of St Dominic, absorbed in the Beatitudes of the Virgin Mary." Letter to John Hay, November 7, 1900, in *ibid.*, 5: 167–69, at 167, 169. This passage and a few others to follow from *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres* are quoted by Marilu Putnam McGregor, "Henry Adams' *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres*: The *Chanson de Geste* of a Nineteenth-Century Jongleur" (PhD diss., University of Houston, 2001), 1, to whom I am indebted. The mention of an attic

is captivating, since it fuses the idea of a cloistered medieval brother with the romantic stereotype of the indigent artist in a garret.

The cloister still occupied Adams's mind a year later in the spring of 1901. When acknowledging receipt of a book by Henry Osborn Taylor, he presented himself as suffering from lassitude and needing cloistered tranquility. Thinking himself alone in this condition, he professed surprise to discover from reading his former colleague's volume that Taylor too was even more deeply versed in the same Middle Ages that obsessed him. Letter to Henry Osborn Taylor, May 4, 1901, in *LHA*, 5: 247–48, at 247: "[I] only returned [to the Middle Ages], at last, because I was tired, and wanted quiet and solitude and absorption. I thought myself alone, and suddenly I find you in possession of the whole cloister. Are there others?" Conjuring up an image of what the writer envisaged is painless (see Fig. n.3).



Fig. n.3 "Fra Beato." Engraving by R. Lehmann, 1874. Published in *The Illustrated London News*, November 28, 1874, 509.

*More than once.* Let us not forget that Adams presented the memoir and *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres* as companion pieces, a sort of diptych.

*English monastery.* As it more commonly called today; it is also known as St. Milburga's Priory. The abbey is located in Much Wenlock, Shropshire.

*to feel at home in a thirteenth-century Abbey.* Adams, *EHA*, chap. 15, "Darwinism (1867–1868)," 929.

*once more took refuge*. Adams, *EHA*, chap. 19, "Chaos (1870)," 985.

*If we lived a thousand years ago*. Letter to Charles Francis Adams Jr., December 18, 1863, in *LHA*, 1: 415–17, at 416.

*other Boston Goths*. For instance, it was the topic of a lead essay in the first issue of the *Architectural Review* in the fall of 1891. See H. Langford Warren, "Notes on Wenlock Priory," *Architectural Review* 1.1 (November 1891): 1–4.

*bustle nowhere*. Dykstra, *Clover Adams*, 61. The reader must make the call on whether the key noun refers to business in general or to the type of framework that in nineteenth-century women's fashion puffed out skirts behind.

*books on medieval architecture*. Dykstra, *Clover Adams*, 61. The primary source is *LHA*, 2: 137.

*Trappist monks*. Friedrich, *Clover*, 237. These brothers are a subset of Cistercians.

*agnostic Mariolater*. On his images of the Virgin and their fit within others held by American intellectuals before and after him, see John Gatta, *American Madonna: Images of the Divine Woman in Literary Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 95–115; Daniel L. Manheim, "Motives of His Own: Henry Adams and the Genealogy of the Virgin," *New England Quarterly* 63.4 (1990): 601–23; Moreland, "Henry Adams," 291–305.

*lay not far from an actual slab*. Clover was also present symbolically within the façade of Romanesque revival home that Henry Hobson Richardson built for them. Not long before her suicide at the age of forty-two, she appears to have sided with the architect and against her spouse by having installed in the front of the house a stone carving of a lion that had above it a cross. For reasons we can only guess, Adams was harrowed by something about the notion of this symbolism. See Friedrich, *Clover*, 316–17. Part of the stone ensemble can be seen at 2618 31st Street NW, where it was incorporated when the Hay-Adams houses were razed in 1927.

*Tintern Abbey*. The poem was composed on July 13, 1798. Alternatively, Wenlock could be said to have acquired for Adams the valences that Caspar David Friedrich had portrayed in oil paintings when he showed the dilapidation of both imagined and actual abbeys. Examples by the German romantic painter would be *The Abbey in the Oakwood* (1809–1810) and *Ruins of Eldena near Greifswald* (1824–1825).

*part of the Gothic revival*. To take only one of countless examples, the architect, designer, and critic Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin had studied Dunbrody Abbey in County Wexford, Ireland as a model to uphold in the designs for the churches he built new in the same town (see Fig. n.4).



Fig. n.4 Dunbrody Abbey, Wexford, Ireland. Photograph by Kevin McNamee, 2017, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Dunbrody\\_Abbey,\\_view\\_from\\_South-east.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Dunbrody_Abbey,_view_from_South-east.jpg), CC BY-SA 4.0.

*Georgian period.* Terence Davis, *The Gothick Taste* (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1975).

*destination for escapists.* On such escapism in the nineteenth century, see Kevin L. Morris, *The Images of the Middle Ages in Romantic and Victorian Literature* (Dover, NH: Croom Helm, 1984); in the early twentieth century (Weimar Republic), Bettina Bildhauer, *Filming the Middle Ages* (London: Reaktion Books, 2011), 26–29; and, more recently, Thomas A. Prendergast and Stephanie Trigg, “What is Happening to the Middle Ages?” *New Medieval Literatures* 9 (2007): 215–29.

*the eternal child of Wordsworth.* Adams, *MSMC*, 423 (chap. 6, “The Virgin of Chartres”).

*postcard.* The card is by the fin-de-siècle artist Jack Abeillé.

*a broken arch.* Adams, *MSMC*, 349 (chap. 1, “Saint Michiel de la Mer del Peril”): “No doubt, they are right, since they are young; but men and women who have lived long and are tired,—who want rest,—who have done with aspirations and ambition,—whose life has been a broken arch—feel this repose and self-restraint as they feel nothing else. The quiet strength of these curved lines, the solid support of the heavy columns, the moderate proportions, even the modified lights, the absence of display, of effort, of self-consciousness, satisfy them as no other art does.”

*with these real and honorary relatives.* His election of such nieces as the putative audience for his long meditation belonged to the endpoint in his strange development as a ladies’ man, if indeed he warrants being called that at all. However oddly, he may have been in fact a *tombeur* (lady-slayer) besides being a *tombeor* (tumbler). For all that he relished being ringed about by admiring young women, he succumbed now



and then to a longing for escape from what he regarded as their garrulity. At those moments he sought out relief from what he identified as avunculitis.

*His Marian passion.* Adams, *EHA*, chap. 25, “The Dynamo and the Virgin (1900),” 1075.

*Miracles of the Virgin.* In French, *Miracles de la Vierge*. Letter to Charles Milnes Gaskell, December 20, 1904, in *LHA*, 5: 618–19, at 618.

*Our Lady underpins the entire thirteenth century.* Adams, *MSMC*, 576 (chap. 13, “Les Miracles de Notre Dame”): “It had invested in her nearly its whole capital, spiritual, artistic, intellectual and economical, even to the bulk of its real and personal estate.”

*considerable resources.* He estimated once in writing to Elizabeth Cameron that his dollar expenditures on fieldwork and library work on Mary reached into six figures, an extraordinary sum for the time.

*spiritual barrenness.* Adams, *MSMC*, 522 (chap. 10, “The Court of the Queen of Heaven”): “We... can safely leave the Virgin in her Majesty... looking down from a deserted heaven, into an empty church, on a dead faith.”

*abides even to his day.* Adams, *MSMC*, 578 (chap. 13, “Les Miracles de Notre Dame”): “The Virgin still remained and remains the most intensely and the most widely and the most personally felt, of all characters, divine or human or imaginary, that ever existed among men.”

*I adore the Virgin.* Letter to Henry Osborn Taylor, May 4, 1901, in *LHA*, 5: 247.

*Virgin Portal.* Adams, *EHA*, chap. 25, “The Dynamo and the Virgin,” 1072–1073.

## Universal Exposition of 1900

*the medieval period could hold its own.* Ruskin, *Seven Lamps of Architecture*, 8: 264 (chap. 7, “The Lamp of Obedience”); to Adams, the “mechanical ingenuity... required to build a cathedral” matched or even overmatched what was needed “to cut a tunnel or contrive a locomotive.”

*Gallery of Machines.* In French, *galerie des machines*. In his memoir, Adams rang a change upon an earlier simile of his. Whereas before he had likened himself to a broken arch, now he wrote of “his historical neck broken by the sudden irruption of forces totally new.” See Adams, *EHA*, chap. 25, “The Dynamo and the Virgin,” 1069.

*replaced the great churches.* Adams, *MSMC*, 439 (chap. 7, “Roses and Apses”): “All that the centuries can do is to express the idea differently:— a miracle or a dynamo; a dome or a coal-pit; a cathedral or a world’s fair; and sometimes to confuse the two

expressions together. The world's fair tends more and more vigorously to express the thought of infinite energy; the great cathedrals of the Middle Ages always reflected the industries and interests of a world's fair."

*a Chicago Exposition for God's Profit.* Adams, Letter to Elizabeth Cameron, September 18, 1895, in *LHA*, 4: 325–27, at 326–27: "The ultimate cathedral of the 13th century was deliberately intended to unite all the arts and sciences in the direct service of God. It was a Chicago Exposition for God's profit. It showed an Architectural exhibit, a Museum of Painting, Glass-staining, Wood and Stone Carving, Music, vocal and instrumental, Embroidering, Jewelry and Gem-setting, Tapestry-weaving, and I know not what other arts, all in one building."

*visits he paid to the exhibition.* See T. J. Jackson Lears, "1900: An Artist of Ideas Ponders the Dynamo at the Paris Exposition," in *A New Literary History of America*, ed. Greil Marcus and Werner Sollors (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009), 450–55, at 450–51. An engrossing book could be written on the place of the Middle Ages in nineteenth-century exhibitions. Highly stimulating pages are to be found in John M. Ganim, *Medievalism and Orientalism: Three Essays on Literature, Architecture and Cultural Identity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 83–107. A sequel would deal with their subsequent repositioning in the twentieth-century successors to those earlier fairs.

*medieval was grouped with the oriental.* Hubert Howe Bancroft, *The Book of the Fair: An Historical and Descriptive Presentation of the Columbian Exposition at Chicago, 1893*, 5 vols. (Chicago: Bancroft, 1893), 5: 835: "Entering the avenue a little to the west of the Woman's building, they would pass between the walls of mediæval villages, between mosques and pagodas, Turkish and Chinese theatres..."

*symbolism of the dynamo and the Virgin.* Paul J. Hamill Jr., "The Future as Virgin: A Latter-Day Look at the Dynamo and the Virgin of Henry Adams," *Modern Language Studies* 3.1 (1973): 8–12.

*Palace of Electricity.* In French, *Palais de l'électricité*.

*second law of thermodynamics.* His sustained effort to make the case is a short book, printed in 1910, entitled *A Letter to American Teachers*. See Keith R. Burich, "Henry Adams, the Second Law of Thermodynamics, and the Course of History," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 48.3 (1987): 467–82.

*Adams had no foreknowledge.* On how close Adams came to prophesying the atomic bomb, see Lewis Mumford, "Apology to Henry Adams," *The Virginia Quarterly Review* 38.2 (1962): 196–217.

*cut off its own existence*. Letter to Charles Francis Adams Jr., April 11, 1862, in *LHA*, 1: 289–92, at 290: “Man has mounted science, and is now run away with... Some day science may have the existence of mankind in its power, and the human race commit suicide, by blowing up the world.”

*similarly alarmist view*. Letter to Brooks Adams, August 10, 1902, in *LHA*, 5: 399–401, at 400: “I apprehend for the next hundred years an ultimate, colossal, cosmic collapse; but not on any of our old lines. My belief is that science is to wreck us, and that we are like monkeys monkeying with a loaded shell; we don’t in the least know or care where our practically infinite energies come from or will bring us to.”

*fathom the rough-and-tumble of politics*. *Democracy: An American Novel*, in Adams, *MSMC*, 7 (chap. 1): “Here, then, was the explanation of her restlessness, discontent, ambition,—call it what you will. It was the feeling of a passenger on an ocean steamer whose mind will not give him rest until he has been in the engine-room and talked with the engineer. She wanted to see with her own eyes the action of primary forces; to touch with her own hand the massive machinery of society; to measure with her own mind the capacity of the motive power. She was bent upon getting to the heart of the great American mystery of democracy and government.”

*unearthed through archaeology*. Bonnie Effros, “Selling Archaeology and Anthropology: Early Medieval Artefacts at the Expositions universelles and the Wiener Weltausstellung, 1867–1900,” *Early Medieval Europe* 16.1 (2008): 23–48; Sally Foster, “Embodied Energies, Embedded Stories: Releasing the Potential of Casts of Early Medieval Sculptures,” in *Making Histories: The Sixth International Insular Art Conference 2011*, ed. Jane Hawkes (Donington, UK: Shaun Tyas, 2013), 339–57.

## Old Paris

*savage from the banks of the Orinoco*. Gautier, *Works*, trans. Sumichrast, 11: 272. The Orinoco is a river in South America that flows from Colombia through Venezuela to the Atlantic Ocean.

*Paris in 1400*. In French, *Paris en 1400*.

*Court of Miracles*. In French, *Cour des miracles*. See, above all, Emery and Morowitz, *Consuming the Past*, 171–208.

*One of three quarters*. “Quartier Moyen Âge.” The other two were sixteenth- and eighteenth-century.

*half-timbered edifices*. These buildings correspond to the style known in German architecture as *Fachwerk*.

*from colonies in Africa and the orient*. John M. Ganim, "Medievalism and Orientalism at the World's Fairs," *Studia Anglica Posnaniensia: International Review of English Studies* 38 (2002): 179–91.

*In Old Paris*. Albert Robida, *Le vieux Paris: Guide historique, pittoresque et anecdotique* (Paris: s.n., 1900). See Elizabeth Emery, "Protecting the Past: Albert Robida and the Vieux Paris Exhibit at the 1900 World's Fair," *Journal of European History* 35 (2005): 65–85; Laurent Antoine, "Le vieux Paris d'Albert Robida à l'exposition universelle de 1900: Restitution en 3D, patrimoine éphémère et expositions universelles," in *Les expositions universelles en France au XIXe siècle: Techniques publics patrimoines*, ed. Anne-Laure Carré et al. (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2012), 447–59.

*parade and street fair*. The festival took place on May 29–30, 1898. On it in general, see Elizabeth Emery, "Staging *La Fête des fous et de l'âne* in 1898: A Commemoration of the Literary Middle Ages," in *Mapping Memory in Nineteenth-Century French Literature and Culture*, ed. Susan Harrow and Andrew Watts, *Faux titre*, vol. 369 (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2012), 59–79. The festivities involved the Place de la Sorbonne in the Latin Quarter and the Place du Panthéon.

*hawked their wares*. Frederick Brown, *For the Soul of France: Culture Wars in the Age of Dreyfus* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 231.

*Albert Robida*. For a biography and bibliography, see Philippe Brun, *Albert Robida, 1848–1926: Sa vie, son oeuvre. Suivi d'une bibliographie complète de ses écrits et dessins* (Paris: Promodis, 1984).

*erase painful memories of damage*. Not everyone welcomed the renovation program. The art critic Jules-Antoine Castagnary implied that the simultaneous effacement of the past and rebuilding of it as it had never been would compel the inhabitants of the capital to write afresh their personal, municipal, and national histories. See Kevin D. Murphy, "The Historic Building in the Modernized City: The Cathedrals of Paris and Rouen in the Nineteenth Century," *Journal of Urban History* 37.2 (2011): 278–96, at 278.

*French predecessor to Walt Disney*. For example, consider Martha Bayless, "Disney's Castles and the Work of the Medieval in the Magic Kingdom," in *The Disney Middle Ages: A Fairy Tale and Fantasy Past*, ed. Tison Pugh and Susan Aronstein (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 39–56.

*three dimensions*. The three-dimensionality has led to the interesting recent project of Antoine, "Le vieux Paris," 447–59.

*cutout mock-ups*. Particularly useful (and widely available) is Robida, *Le vieux Paris*. For the cutout, see *L'imagerie d'Épinal et le Vieux Paris*, no. 136 (Pellerin et Cie): Église Saint-Julien des Ménétriers-Vieux Paris.

*living-history museums*. Sten Rentzhog, *Open Air Museums: The History and Future of a Visionary Idea*, trans. Skans Victoria Airey (Stockholm: Carlsson; [Östersund, Sweden]: Jamtli, 2007). For a strongly America-centric focus, see Scott Magelssen, *Living History Museums: Undoing History through Performance* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2007).

*Norwegian Museum of Cultural History*. The Norsk Folkemuseum at Bygdøy.

*Skansen*. Founded by the Swede Artur Hazelius. The name, meaning the Sconce, has become a common noun to designate such living museums: *skansen*. They involved large staffs enacting features of vanished or vanishing folklife, including music and dance.

*Saint Julian of the Minstrels*. In French, Saint-Julien-des-Ménestriers.

*commissioned to be built*. For information on the church, see Kay Brainerd Slocum, “*Confrérie, Bruderschaft and Guild: The Formation of Musicians’ Fraternal Organisations in Thirteenth- and Fourteenth-Century Europe*,” *Early Music History* 14 (1995): 257–74, at 266.

*bell-ringer*. Carillon, much in vogue then, is an arrangement that allows twenty-three or more bells in the belfry of a church to be sounded from a keyboard. Also popular was the earlier practice of change-ringing, in which different individuals yanked on ropes or otherwise acted to peel the instruments. Other early music concerts were offered as well by vocal groups. The groups included such as the Schola Cantorum and Chanteurs de Saint-Gervais. See Elizabeth Emery, “Albert Robida, Medieval Publicist,” in *Makers of the Middle Ages: Essays in Honor of William Calin*, ed. Richard Utz and idem (Kalamazoo, MI: Studies in Medievalism, Western Michigan University, 2011), 71–76, at 74, and Emery, “Protecting the Past,” 69.

*Peter Abelard*. The medieval French logician and theologian was popularly known best for his affair with Heloise.

*The event left many disconcerted*. Although the medieval aspects are not discussed, see Richard D. Mandell, *Paris 1900: The Great World’s Fair* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967), 104–21. For the context of the exposition in the experiences of American visitors (particularly Henry Adams) to the French capital, see David McCullough, *The Greater Journey: Americans in Paris* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2011), 446–49.

## Dynamo and Virgin Suicide

*wide-mouthed wryness*. Letter to Mabel Hooper La Farge, June 17, 1902, in *LHA*, 5: 386–87, at 387: “My idea of Paradise is a perfect automobile going 30 miles an hour on a smooth road to a twelfth-century cathedral.”



*hard put to maintain his aplomb*. Letter to Elizabeth Cameron, February 26, 1900, in *LHA*, 5: 97–99, at 98: “Every day opens a new horizon, and the rate we are going gets faster and faster till my twelfth-century head spins, and I hang on to the straps and shut my poor old eyes.”

*such a locomotive*. Jonathan Glancey, *Architecture* (New York: DK Publications, 2006), 374.

*Virgin-driven strength of the medieval West*. “Never has the Western world shown anything like the energy and unity with which she then flung herself on the East, and for the moment made the East recoil.”

*school of Romanesque literature*. Letter to Elizabeth Cameron, September 18, 1899, in *LHA*, 5: 31–34, at 32.

*collection of Marian miracles*. The edition was of the *Gracial*, in Anglo-Norman French octosyllables, by one Adgar.

*Thomas Aquinas*. Ernest Samuels, *Henry Adams: The Major Phase* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1964), 220.

*Submerging himself in scholastic philosophy*. Chandler, *Dream of Order*, 242.

*Prayer to the Virgin of Chartres*. The poem was published posthumously in 1920, in Henry Adams, *Letters to a Niece and Prayer to the Virgin of Chartres*, ed. Mabel La Farge (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1920), <https://archive.org/details/letterstoneice00adamrich>, 125–34. On Adam of St. Victor’s prayer, see Adams, *MSMC*, 429–30 (chap. 6, “The Virgin of Chartres”), 643–44 (chap. 15, “The Mystics”).

*the last two syllables*. On the pun, see Moreland, *Medievalist Impulse*, 90.

*first fair copy*. Tehan, *Henry Adams in Love*, 172–74, 249.

*Catholic Renaissance*. Samuels, *Henry Adams: The Major Phase*, 221.

*Our Lady of Lafayette Square*. John Hay, Letter to Henry Adams, January 3, 1884, quoted and cited by Dykstra, *Clover Adams*, 162, 282. On her, see Friedrich, *Clover*; Dykstra, *Clover Adams*; Eugenia Kaledin, *The Education of Mrs. Henry Adams* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1981).

*staple of the photographic profession*. Adams, *Letters of Mrs. Henry Adams*, 451. On the relative frequency of such poisonings, see Bill Jay, “Death in the Darkroom,” *Phoebus* 3 (Tempe: Arizona State University, 1982): 85–98, repr. in *Fields of Writing: Readings across the Disciplines*, ed. Nancy Comley et al. (New York: St. Martin’s, 1984), 178–92.

*at least the first dozen of them*. Adams was pointed in emphasizing twelve of the thirteen years in his marriage: see Letter to Edwin L. Godkin, December 16, 1885, in *LHA*, 2: 643.

*sustained and rigorous silence about her*. As he observed in a letter in 1891: "Everyone knows that the mark of real despair and deepest sense of abandonment is silence." Letter to Lucy Baxter, December 22, 1891, in *LHA*, 3: 592–93, at 592.

*Adams Memorial*. Fullest information on the monument is available in Lincoln Kirstein, *Memorial to a Marriage: An Album on the Saint-Gaudens Memorial in Rock Creek Cemetery Commissioned by Henry Adams in Honor of His Wife, Marian Hooper Adams*, with photographs by Jerry L. Thompson and Marian Adams (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1989); Cynthia J. Mills, "The Adams Memorial and American Funerary Sculpture (1891–1927)" (PhD diss., University of Maryland, 1996).

*designed by Stanford White*. James M. Goode, *Washington Sculpture: A Cultural History of Outdoor Sculpture in the Nation's Capital* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 420–21.

*The Peace of God That Passeth Understanding*. After the Epistle of Paul to the Philippians 4:7.

*Brahma with Buddha*. In 1891, Adams wrote a poem that has been entitled "Buddha and Brahma": Adams, *Novels*, ed. Samuels and Samuels, 1195–201. In 1895, he copied the lines and sent them to John Hay, with the request that his friend not circulate them. For interpretation, see Vern Wagner, "The Lotus of Henry Adams," *The New England Quarterly* 27 (1954): 75–94.

*discussions of nirvana*. Henry Adams, *John La Farge: Essays* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1987), 51–54.

*Morgan Madonna*. "Gothic Art Shown at Metropolitan," *New York Times*, July 8, 1908, 6.

*all these things at once*. Neither Saint-Gaudens nor Adams left any reference to "The Sacrifice of Iphigeneia at Aulis" from Pompeii that survives from the first half of the first century CE. The ancient Roman fresco may be based in turn, at least in part, on a lost original by the Greek painter Timanthes of Cythnos from the fourth century BCE (see Fig. n.5). The wall painting depicts a scene from the body of myths that relate to the Trojan War. To the right the princess of Argos is being dragged off for sacrifice to Artemis, with to the far right either the seer Calchas or her father, King Agamemnon. To the far left stands a mantled shape, either her grieving mother Clytemnestra or her father. For the idea that it was Agamemnon represented in the painting by Timanthes, see Pliny, *Historia naturalis* 35.73, in Pliny, *Natural History*, ed. and trans. H. Rackham, 10 vols. (London: William Heinemann, 1952), 9: 314–15. Even in the inconclusive

gender of the person hidden within the cowl, the shrouded figure in the fresco very suggestively resembles the statue. Still, the resemblance could be mere coincidence. No evidence exists for supposing that either the patron or the sculptor knew the piece of art, let alone that either had it in mind. From the peristyle of the House of the Tragic Poet, Pompeii, the ancient work (123 × 126 cm) is now in Naples, Italy, Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli.



Fig. n.5 The Sacrifice of Iphigenia, from the House of the Tragic Poet in Pompeii. Fresco, first century CE. Naples, Museo archeologico nazionale di Napoli. Photograph by Carole Raddato, 2014. CC BY-SA 2.0.

*Sistine Madonna*. With all due respect to Patricia O'Toole, *The Five of Hearts: An Intimate Portrait of Henry Adams and His Friends (1880–1918)* (New York: C. N. Potter, 1990), 165, who mistakes it for a fresco.

*universality and anonymity*. He wrote, "The whole meaning and feeling of the figure is in its universality and anonymity." Letter to Richard Watson Gilder, October 14, 1896, in *LHA*, 4: 430.

*not much later*. In February of 1892.

*explicated devotion to the Mother of God*. Adams, *MSMC*, 582–83 (chap. 13, “Les Miracles de Notre Dame”): “No one has ventured to explain why the Virgin wielded exclusive power over poor and rich, sinners and saints, alike... Why was the Woman struck out of the Church and ignored in the State? These questions are not antiquarian or trifling in historical value; they tug at the very heart-strings of all that makes whatever order is in the cosmos. If a Unity exists, in which and toward which all energies centre, it must explain and include Duality, Diversity, Infinity—Sex!”

*psychoanalytic readings of his personal life*. On the first issue, see Alfred Kazin, “Religion as Culture: Henry Adams’s *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres*,” in *Henry Adams and His World*, ed. David R. Contosta and Robert Muccigrosso, Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, n.s., vol. 83,4 (Philadelphia, PA: American Philosophical Society, 1993), 48–56. On Adams’s attachment to Mary, see Joseph F. Byrnes, *The Virgin of Chartres: An Intellectual and Psychological History of the Work of Henry Adams* (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1981); Moreland, *Medievalist Impulse*, 77–117, with notes at 213–19. Adams’s fascination with the Virgin in the Middle Ages is also stressed by Siegmund Levarie, “Henry Adams, Avant-Gardist in Early Music,” *American Music* 15 (1997): 429–45.

*consolation-gift*. Byrnes, *Virgin of Chartres*, 165.

*channel his passions*. Tehan, *Henry Adams in Love*, 129 describes in Freudian terms as sublimation his response to Cameron’s distancing of herself from him.

*much explored*. For an early exposition, see Jonathan Daniels, *The End of Innocence* (Philadelphia, PA: Lippincott, 1954). For the most recent assessment of the issue, see Dykstra, *Clover Adams*.

*spluttered once tactlessly*. Still more inconsiderately, all the more so for being unmistakable, he predicted that Henry’s wife would follow in the footsteps of her aunt by taking her own life. Charles Francis Adams Jr., *Memorabilia*, in *Woodrow Wilson Papers*, ed. John E. Little (Princeton) unpublished, cited by Kaledin, *Education of Mrs. Henry Adams*, 264.

*recently losing her father*. He died on April 13, 1885.

*called the baby girl*. Dusingere, *Henry Adams*, 189.

*ratify her passion for photography*. On this painful episode in their marriage, see Laura Saltz, “Clover Adams’s Dark Room: Photography and Writing, Exposure and Erasure,” *Prospects: An Annual of American Cultural Studies* 24 (1999): 458–62.

*high-circulation magazine*. The periodical in question was *The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine*.

## Henry Adams as Jongleur

*exposed before the image*. Louis Zukofsky, *Prepositions: The Collected Critical Essays of Louis Zukofsky*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1981), 86–130, at 116–17.

*better cards*. Adams, *EHA*, chap. 1, “Quincy (1838–1848),” 724.

*neurasthenia*. George M. Beard, “Neurasthenia, or Nervous Exhaustion,” *The Boston Medical and Surgical Journal* n.s. 3.13 (1869): 217–21; Lears, *No Place of Grace*, 47–58.

*expelled as a useless member*. Adams, *MSMC*, 601 (chap. 13, “Les Miracles de Notre Dame”).

*the plight of the writer*. See Laurence B. Holland, “A Grammar of Assent,” *The Sewanee Review* 88.2 (1980): 260–66, at 266.

*the bleak modernity of the early twentieth century*. For some context, see Keith R. Burich, “Henry Adams’ Annis [sic] Mirabilis: 1900 and the Making of a Modernist,” *American Studies* 32 (1991): 103–16.

*another inducement*. Adams, *MSMC*, 356–57 (chap. 2, “La Chanson de Roland”): “To feel the art of Mont Saint Michel and Chartres we have got to become pilgrims again: but, just now, the point of most interest is not the pilgrim so much as the minstrel who sang to amuse him,—the *jugleor* or *jongleur*,—who was at home in every abbey, castle or cottage, as well as at every shrine.”

*postured himself as a minstrel*. Although it pays little heed to *Le Tumbeor Notre Dame*, Marilu McGregor’s “Henry Adams’ *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres*” investigates closely Adams’s self-conception as a jongleur.

*contrasted his own mission*. Henry Adams, Letter to Henry Osborn Taylor, January 17, 1905, in *LHA*, 5: 627–28, at 628: “Our two paths run in a manner parallel in reverse directions, but I can run and jump along mine, while you must employ a powerful engine to drag your load.”

*John La Farge*. Letter to Henry Osborn Taylor, May 4, 1901, in *LHA*, 5: 247–48, at 248: “Between Bishop Stubbs and John La Farge the chasm has required lively gymnastics. The text of Edward the Confessor was uncommonly remote from a twelfth-century window. To clamber across the gap has needed many years of La Farge’s closest instruction.”

*juggler*. Adams refers to an evolution from *jugleor* to *jongleur*.

*Taillefer*. The name is rendered in Latin as *incisor ferri* “hewer of iron.” In Latin, the only eleventh-century mention of this juggler was in the *Carmen de Hastingae proelio* (Poem on



the Battle of Hastings). In the twelfth century we have William of Malmesbury's *Gesta regum* (Deeds of the Kings) and Henry of Huntingdon's *Historia Anglorum* (History of the English). In Old French he appears in Wace's *Roman de Rou* and Geoffrey Gaimar's *Estoire des Engleis* (History of the English). See William Sayers, "The Jongleur Taillefer at Hastings: Antecedents and Literary Fate," *Viator* 14 (1983): 77–88.

*drew special attention*. Later he was the subject of a 1903 composition by Richard Strauss, who declined suggestions to compose a similar piece based on *Our Lady's Tumbler*. The German composer's opera set to music a ballad composed in 1816 by the German poet Ludwig Uhland.

*letter written to Elizabeth Cameron*. Letter to Elizabeth Cameron, December 28, 1891, in *LHA*, 3: 593–98, at 594.

*Richard Coeur-de-lion*. By the Belgian composer André Grétry, with a text by Michel-Jean Sedaine.

*O Richard, O my king*. "Oh Richard! oh, mon roi, l'univers t'abandonne."

*camped out in Washington*. He lived in two homes, first at 1607 H Street NW with Clover in a house leased from the financier, William Wilson Corcoran, and later in one of his own at 1603 H Street NW, at the corner of H and Sixteenth Streets.

*Angelic Doctor*. On Adams and Aquinas, see Michael Colacurcio, "The Dynamo and the Angelic Doctor: The Bias of Henry Adams' Medievalism," *American Quarterly* 17 (1965): 696–712.

## Unity and Multiplicity

*conceived of the two projects*. Adams, *EHA*, chap. 29, "The Abyss of Ignorance (1902)," 1117: "Eight or ten years of study had led Adams to think he might use the century 1150–1250, expressed in Amiens Cathedral and the Works of Thomas Aquinas, as the unit from which he might measure motion down to his own time, without assuming anything as true or untrue except relation. The movement might be studied at once in philosophy and mechanics. Setting himself to the task, he began a volume which he mentally knew as 'Mont Saint Michel and Chartres: a study of thirteenth-century unity.' From that point he proposed to fix a position for himself, which he could label: 'The Education of Henry Adams: a study of twentieth-century multiplicity.' With the help of these two points of relation, he hoped to project his lines forward and backward indefinitely, subject to correction from anyone who should know better." The passage gains additional force from being quoted in the opening "Editor's Preface" in the Library of America edition, p. 719.

*recoil from an 'over civilized' modern existence*. Lears, *No Place of Grace*, xv.

*On German Architecture.* In German, *Von deutscher Baukunst*.

*authentic Germanness.* Translation and discussion in W. D. Robson-Scott, *The Literary Background of the Gothic Revival in Germany: A Chapter in the History of Taste* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 82. For the original text, see *Von deutscher Baukunst: Goethes Hymnus auf Erwin von Steinbach, seine Entstehung und Wirkung*, ed. Ernst Beutler, Reihe der Vorträge und Schriften, vol. 4 (Munich, Germany: Bruckmann, 1943), 12–13. For a full and detailed consideration, see Harald Keller, “Goethes Hymnus auf das Strassburger Münster und die Wiedererweckung der Gotik im 18. Jahrhundert: 1772–1972,” *Sitzungsberichte–Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse*, 1974, vol. 4 (Munich, Germany: Verlag der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1974).

*in much the same spirit.* Adams, *EHA*, chap. 4, “Harvard College (1854–1858),” 776–77.

*later in life.* Kaledin, *Education of Mrs. Henry Adams*, xvi.

*anarchical skepticism.* Kaledin, *Education of Mrs. Henry Adams*, 8.

*Enlightenment contempt and romantic glorification.* On the Enlightenment and romanticism, see Brian Stock, “The Middle Ages as Subject and Object: Romantic Attitudes and Academic Medievalism,” *New Literary History* 5.3 (1974): 527–47.

## Medievalist Dream of a Dying DC Dynasty?

*To treat Henry Adams.* “Henry Adams: A Criticism in Autobiography” (third of three sections), *Hound and Horn* 4.1 (October–December 1930): 46–72, at 70n (1). These essays were based on Zukofsky’s master’s thesis on Adams. (When they were reprinted later, this passage was not included: see Zukofsky, *Prepositions*, 86–130.) Zukofsky continued to engage with Adams after his thesis, as in “William Carlos Williams” (1928), in *Prepositions*, 45–53, at 51–52. The poet drew heavily on Adams in his poem “A,” although less in subsequent than in the original plans. On the original and subsequent plans for the tenth part of the original “A,” see Barry Ahearn, *Zukofsky’s “A”: An Introduction* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983), 77–78. Ultimately Adams’s yearning for unity may have rendered him and his jongleur untenable as models for Zukofsky. On Zukofsky and Adams generally, see Sandra Kumamoto Stanley, *Louis Zukofsky and the Transformation of a Modern American Poetics* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994), 26–45.

*William Morris before him.* Jennifer Harris, “William Morris and the Middle Ages,” in *William Morris and the Middle Ages: A Collection of Essays, Together with a Catalogue of Works Exhibited at the Whitworth Art Gallery, 28 September–8 December 1984*, ed. Joanna Banham and Jennifer Harris (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1984), 1–17, with notes on p. 58.

*self-financing a limited edition.* Henry Adams, Letter to Elizabeth Cameron, February 8, 1903, in *LHA*, 5: 452–55, at 453: “[My] twelfth-century manuscript has swelled and swelled to the size of an ox, so that I can’t afford to print it, as I meant. A private edition of fifty copies could cost at least fifteen hundred dollars, and I prefer Ming potiches. Think of giving up twenty Ming potiches [vases or jars of antique Chinese porcelain] for the vanity of a twentieth volume! As for publishing it at the expense of a thief in calf-binding, the idea is worse than shameful.”

*the Gothic spirit within us.* John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice* (vol. 2, chap. 6 “The Nature of Gothic”), in *The Works of John Ruskin*, ed. E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, 39 vols. (London: George Allen, 1903–1912), 10: 182.

*a threat to the integrity.* In a letter to Charles Milnes Gaskell, February 10, 1881, in *LHA*, 2: 419–20, at 419, he adds: “Down-trodden races do avenge themselves.” Adams’s racial and ethnic views fit within the context evoked in Nell Irwin Painter, *The History of White People* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2010), though he is mentioned explicitly only at p. 235.

*drew a likeness.* Henry Adams, Letter to Brooks Adams, September 8, 1895, in *LHA*, 4: 321–22: “The Gothic always looks to me a little theatrical and false, like its roofs. The Gothic church, both in doctrine and in expression, is not my idea of a thoroughly happy illusion. It is always restless, grasping and speculative; it exploits the world, and makes profits; it is the legitimate parent of Lombard Street; the legitimate child of the Jews. The pointed arch is cheap. Still, it had very great beauties in its best time, and, as an artistic form of illusion, it gives me a sense of reflecting my own ideals and limitations. It is human.”

*fuller telling.* See, for example, James F. White, *The Cambridge Movement: The Ecclesiologists and the Gothic Revival* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 8.

## Notes to Chapter 3

### The Goth Side of Washington

*wonderful superiority*. Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin, *Contrasts; or, a Parallel between the Noble Edifices of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries, and Similar Buildings of the Present Day; Shewing the Present Decay of Taste Accompanied by Appropriate Text* (London: St. Marie's Grange, Salisbury, Wilts., 1836), 1.

*Pre-Raphaelite periodical*. [Russell Sturgis,] "An Important Gothic Building," *The New Path* 2.2 (1864): 17–32. On the building and its architect, the New York-based Peter Bennett Wight, see David Howard Dickason, *The Daring Young Men: The Story of the American Pre-Raphaelites* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1953), 98–106.

*National Academy of Design*. From 1863 to 1865, at Fifth Avenue and 89th Street.

*dismantlement*. It was taken down in 1899. Parts of its design were salvaged and incorporated into the church of Our Lady of Lourdes, erected in New York between 1902 and 1904.

*Venetian Gothic*. The construction paid homage to what its architect viewed as defining characteristics of fifteenth-century Italy, such as logical geometry, vibrant colors, and craftsman-like sculpture.

*letter written to Ruskin*. *The Correspondence of John Ruskin and Charles Eliot Norton*, ed. John Lewis Bradley and Ian Ousby (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 234–37, at 234: letter 166 (incomplete) from Charles Eliot Norton to John Ruskin (Innsbruck, July 1871), cited by Kathryn McClintock, "The Classroom and the Courtyard: Medievalism in American Highbrow Culture," in *Medieval Art in America: Patterns of Collecting, 1800–1940*, ed. Elizabeth Bradford Smith (University Park: Palmer Museum of Art, The Pennsylvania State University, 1996), 41–53, at 42: "For largeness of design within the limits of the State, for method of policy, for gravity of purpose, for splendour in life, for the union of beauty with strength, elegance with force, luxury with self-control, Venice and the Venetians of old were never matched in history."

*writings and thought of Ruskin and Viollet-le-Duc*. *LHA*, 2: 103.

*Islamic architecture*. A point made as long ago as Andrew Jackson Downing, "A Few Words on Our Progress in Building," in idem, *Rural Essays*, ed. George William Curtis (New York: Da Capo Press, 1974), 214–23, at 216. For the fullest coverage, see Deborah Howard, "Ruskin and the East," *Architectural Heritage* 10 (1999): 37–53.

*central building of the world*. Ruskin, *Stones of Venice*, 1: chap. 1, in idem, *Works*, 9: 38.

*contact with Eastern sophistication.* The theory that the pointed arch originated in Islamic architecture continues to be debated. See Peter Draper, “Islam and the West: The Early Use of the Pointed Arch Revisited,” *Architectural History* 48 (2005): 1–20. By the East, Ruskin meant not the Far East but the Near or Middle East.

*implanted by the Arabs.* Régine Pernoud, *Those Terrible Middle Ages!: Debunking the Myths* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000), 31.

*Greek colonnade.* [Sturgis,] “Important Gothic Building,” 19: “In that hot-bed of the false and ridiculous in Art, Washington City, the ancient faith in the Greek colonnade still holds sway.” Greek revival and the Grecian manner lent themselves well, perhaps all too well, to the structures that had been raised up already in the Colonial and Federalist styles.

*American Pre-Raphaelites advocated Gothic.* [Sturgis,] “Important Gothic Building,” 26: “We say, therefore, build Gothic buildings, because the Gothic framework is beyond all comparison the most noble of all, the most varied and easily adapted to all purposes, the strongest, the most easily suited by all materials, and by far the most susceptible of decoration.”

*sole architectural form of worth.* As their first principle, they ordained: “All buildings should be designed in the mediaeval spirit, in other words should be ‘Gothic’ and not revived classic of any school.” [Sturgis,] “Important Gothic Building,” 18.

*protoskyscrapers.* The seven wonders of the ancient world did include two structures marvelous for their height, the Great Pyramid and the Lighthouse of Alexandria. Only the pyramid still stands—and it predates the periods associated with Greece and Rome.

*The Castle.* The choice of a castellar building for a museum had distinguished precedent in the Wadsworth Atheneum (see Fig. n.6). This cultural institution opened in 1844 in downtown Hartford and has continued to operate continuously in Connecticut since then as a public art museum, while serving other functions initially.



Fig. n.6 Postcard depicting Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, CT (New York: Illustrated Post Card Co., early twentieth century).



*James Renwick Jr.* His most important earlier commission was Grace Church in New York City, in English Gothic (see Fig. n.7). Renwick went on later to design what may be regarded as his masterpiece, Saint Patrick's Cathedral in Manhattan, which was constructed from 1858 to 1879 (see Fig. n.8).



Fig. n.7 Postcard depicting Grace Church, New York, NY (New York: Leighton & Valentine Co., ca. 1912).



Fig. n.8 Postcard depicting St. Patrick's Cathedral, New York, NY (Detroit, MI: Detroit Publishing Company, early twentieth century).

*National Style of Architecture for America.* Robert Dale Owen, *Hints on Public Architecture, Containing, Among Other Illustrations, Views and Plans of the Smithsonian Institution: Together with an Appendix Relative to Building Materials. Prepared, on Behalf of the Building Committee of the Smithsonian Institution* (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1849), 109. For detailed discussion, see Kathleen Curran, *The Romanesque Revival: Religion, Politics, and Transnational Exchange, Buildings, Landscapes, and Societies*, vol. 2 (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), 243–58.

*Trinity Episcopal Church.* This house of worship, located at 3rd and C Streets NW, owes much to English Perpendicular Gothic, on the micro level in its filigree and other such

features, and on the macro in its two steeples, with brick towers surmounted by open wooden spires. The church stood from 1849 until it was leveled by the wrecking ball in 1936. James M. Goode, *Capital Losses: A Cultural History of Washington's Destroyed Buildings*, 2nd ed. (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Books, 2003), 233–35 (no. 124).

*Georgetown University*. The formerly autonomous quarter of Georgetown became consolidated governmentally within the District of Columbia in 1871.

*Healy Hall*. The edifice is named after Father Patrick Francis Healy, the twenty-ninth president of Georgetown University. The first mixed-race president of any major college in the nation, Healy was born of an Irish-American plantation owner and a biracial slave woman, but he self-identified as Irish-American.

*designed to signal the presence*. The exterior, 312' high × 95' wide, required two million bricks and three thousand cubic yards of stone, to produce a building five stories high. It could be said fairly to loom over the vicinity.

*built from 1877 to 1879*. The architects were John L. Smithmeyer and Paul J. Pelz, respectively Austrian- and German-born. They are best known for their controversial involvement in the construction of the Library of Congress, now called the Thomas Jefferson Building, which ended in their dismissal in 1888 and 1892, respectively. For the Jefferson Building they chose a completely different spectrum of styles, with medieval revivals not being among them. John Y. Cole and Henry Hope Reed, eds., *The Library of Congress: The Art and Architecture of the Thomas Jefferson Building* (New York: Norton, 1997). For one of the architects' defense of his involvement in the project, see John L. Smithmeyer, *History of the Construction of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.* (Washington, DC: Beresford, printer, 1906), <https://www.loc.gov/resource/rbc0001.2016gen14434/?st=gallery>

*Gothic at the core*. Despite the prevailing Gothicism, the overall style is sometimes called Flemish Romanesque Revival. The building has imposing spaces, notably the 750-seat auditorium named Gaston Hall and the cast-iron Riggs Library.

*Corcoran office building*. The juncture of 15th and F Streets and Pennsylvania Avenue has been a popular spot for viewing parades on Pennsylvania Avenue. The Corcoran office building was at 515 15th Street NW.

*Post Office Building*. Once known as the Old Post Office Building, it is presently called the Trump International Hotel Washington DC.

*finished in 1899*. At 1100 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, where it still stands.

*Romanesque revival style*. Or *Rundbogenstil*—round-arch style. Its manner marked a radical departure from most bank and office buildings of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the United States, which resemble Greco-Roman temples.

*a cathedral and a cotton mill.* “National Capital Topics: Congress and the Questions of Expansion and Increased Armaments Confronting It,” *New York Times*, November 6, 1898, 14 (second column).

*Washington National Cathedral.* The second-largest such church in the United States after Saint John’s in New York City, it ranks also as the third-tallest building in the District of Columbia. A fine study of the National Cathedral within the context of medievalism is Elizabeth Emery, “Postcolonial Gothic: The Medievalism of America’s ‘National’ Cathedrals,” in *Medievalisms in the Postcolonial World: The Idea of “the Middle Ages” outside Europe*, ed. Kathleen Davis and Nadia Altschul (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 237–64.

*received its charter.* A Celtic-style Peace Cross, dedicated in 1898 by President McKinley to commemorate the approaching end of the Spanish-American War (and the simultaneous ratification of the United States as a superpower), was placed near the former location of the residence where the planning meetings for the construction of the cathedral were held.

*The foundation stone was laid.* Its final finial was set in place, with President George H. W. Bush present, in 1990.

*heightens its visibility.* In height, the National Cathedral stands only a little more than half as tall as the Washington Monument. At its highest the church is 299’ (91 m) as compared with the 555’ (169 m) of the monument. It stands on an elevation high above Georgetown and the rest of the city.

*one such view.* Moore, *Daniel H. Burnham*, 2: 47–69, at 48.

*unworldly serenity and spirituality.* Unintentionally, a massive construction of stones that was meant in part to endow the United States with a ready-made medieval past speaks to the way cathedrals have changed in their original contexts, since through renovation programs and wartime destruction in many European cities they have been systematically denuded of the shops and stalls that once crushed up against them, and have become over the last two centuries ever more isolated and ringed about by roads and plazas.

*the bishop’s seat.* “Washington Letter,” *The Church Standard* 80, April 20, 1901: 881–82, at 882.

*American Westminster Abbey.* Charles Henry Brent, *A Master Builder, Being the Life and Letters of Henry Yates Satterlee, First Bishop of Washington* (New York: Longmans, Green & Co. 1916), <https://archive.org/details/masterbuilderb00bren>, 360–92, at 363.

*resolutely Gothic.* In a fool’s errand, two members of the committee, the architects Charles McKim and Daniel Burnham, sought unavailingly to impose first a “classic

Renaissance” and later a Venetian style upon the projected edifice. Their idea was that the cathedral would complement the federal buildings on the downtown Mall. Their advocacy was overpowered by that of the first Episcopal Bishop of Washington.

*two English architects.* Brent, *A Master Builder*, 423–55. The two were George F. Bodley and Henry Vaughan.

*ambitions of America to lead modernity.* Moore, *Daniel H. Burnham*, 2: 49: “It would be grand if your newer world in America should show modern civilization that the ancient dignity and beauty of religious Christian architecture can be achieved in these days. It could be! Gothic art, with all its acceptance of the beauty of nature as its basis, and its added spiritual, aspiring fervor could do all this.”

*Saint Alban’s School.* The school opened in 1909 as the National Cathedral School for Boys.

*Alban Towers.* At 3700 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington DC, where it was built on a block of vacant land purchased from the cathedral. The building originally had 216 apartments.

*completed in 1930.* In the same stretch of time the Broadmoor, with 179 apartments and 12 hotel rooms, was under construction at 3601 Connecticut Avenue NW (see Fig. n.9). In this case, the Gothic elements took the form of ornaments concentrated in the upper stories and around the entrances. As apartment houses in this style, they had been preceded by the Chastleton at 1701 16th Street NW, completed nearly a decade earlier in 1920 (see Fig. n.10).



Fig. n.9 Postcard depicting the Broadmoor Apartments, Washington, DC (ca. 1945).



Fig. n.10 The Chastleton Hotel, Washington, DC. Photograph, ca. 1921. Photographer unknown. Washington, DC, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

*Other bricks and mortar.* Such as Alto Towers at 3206 Wisconsin Avenue NW, Washington, DC.

*Gothicizing touches.* See James M. Goode, *Best Addresses: A Century of Washington's Distinguished Apartment Houses* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1988), on the Alban Towers, 270–73; on the Broadmoor, 274–79; and on the Chastleton, 192–95.

*came too late.* As a rule, people are not easily influenced after they have died, with such notable exceptions as the Virgin Mary.

## Goths and the Meanings of Gothic(k)

*Gothic was first employed.* For all the information on the chronology and taxonomy of usage I rely upon the *OED*, s.v.

*in English.* Samuel Klinger, *The Goths in England: A Study in Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Thought* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1952).

*This Gothic was Gothick.* From a present-day outlook, we might say that the archaizing spelling *Gothick* emphasizes the ick factor in Gothic literature and architecture of this first revival.

*fascination with the medieval period.* Elizabeth Feld and Stuart P. Feld, eds., *In Pointed Style: The Gothic Revival in America, 1800–1860* (New York: Hirsch and Adler Galleries, 2006).



*in full operation*. Susan B. Matheson and Derek D. Churchill, *Modern Gothic: The Revival of Medieval Art* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Art Gallery, 2000).

*Gothic mania*. Robert Kerr, *The Gentleman's House; or, How to Plan English Residences, from the Parsonage to the Palace; with Tables of Accommodation and Cost, and... Plans*, 2nd ed. (London: Murray, 1865), <https://archive.org/details/gentlemanshouseo00kerr>, 368: cited (without identification of page) by Megan Aldrich, *Gothic Revival* (London: Phaidon, 1994), 191.

*Many such buildings were erected*. Of the 214 erected under the Act of 1818, 174 were Gothic, which works out to 75%. See Kenneth Clark, *The Gothic Revival: An Essay in the History of Taste* (London: Constable, 1928), 95.

*swing to the sublime*. David B. Morris, "Gothic Sublimity," *New Literary History* 16 (1985): 299–319.

*sublime actualities of Gothic art*. Coleridge, "General Character of the Gothic Literature and Art," in *Coleridge's Miscellaneous Criticism*, ed. Thomas Middleton Raysor (London: Constable, 1936), 11–17, at 12: "But the Gothic art is sublime. On entering a cathedral, I am filled with devotion and awe; I am lost to the actualities that surround me, and my whole being expands into the infinite; earth and air, nature and art, all swell up into eternity, and the only sensible impression left is, 'that I am nothing!'"

*numinous qualities and emotions*. André Lagarde and Laurent Michard, *Moyen Âge: Les grands auteurs français du programme*, Collection textes et littérature, vol. 1 (Paris: Bordas, 1962), 110, on the picturesqueness of the story.

*petrification of our religion*. Coleridge, *Lectures 1808–1819: On Literature*, ed. R. A. Foakes, 2 vols. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), 2: 59–60. The passage begins: "The Gothic architecture impresses the beholder with a sense of self-annihilation; he becomes, as it were, a part of the work contemplated. An endless complexity and variety are united into one whole, the plan of which is not distinct from the execution." The key phrase is often misquoted, with "petrification" in lieu of "petrification." See Loth and Sadler, *Only Proper Style*, 60.

*Gospel of Matthew*. Matthew 16:18.

*Everybody must get stoned*. The lyric is the recurrent chorus in Bob Dylan's "Rainy Day Women #12 and 35."

*endlessly pliable recombination*. Victor Hugo, *Notre-Dame de Paris*, in idem, *Oeuvres complètes de Victor Hugo* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1985–), book 3, chap. 2: "Tous ces charmants hasards d'architecture qui font que l'art gothique a l'air de recommencer ses combinaisons à chaque monument."

*Gothick is the only Christian architecture.* J. M. Neale, *A Few Words to Church Builders*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: University Press, 1844), 5, quoted by White, *Cambridge Movement*, 86: "We are not now called on to prove that Gothick is the only Christian architecture. We believe that, after a well-fought battle, this point has been conceded: and that, though second-rate architects may, for a few years yet, employ Romanesque or revived Pagan, those who are at the head of their profession will be guilty of such serious errors no longer."

*Gothic went through multiple stages.* Agnes Addison, "Early American Gothic," in *Romanticism in America: Papers Contributed to a Symposium Held at the Baltimore Museum of Art, May 13, 14, 15, 1940*, ed. George Boas (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1940), 118–37, at 121–22.

*stranglehold.* Lester F. Goodchild, "Oxbridge's Tudor Gothic Influences on American Academic Architecture," *Paedagogica historica* 36.1 (2000): 266–98.

## John Ruskin and William Morris

*The middle ages are to me the only ages.* Bradley and Ousby, *Correspondence* (no. 288, JR to CEN, January 18, 1876), 374–75, at 374.

*how well the medieval period went over.* Charles Dellheim, *The Face of the Past: The Preservation of the Medieval Inheritance in Victorian England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

*study of medieval architecture.* Professional instruction in architecture in the United States started only in 1866, when William Robert Ware began to teach at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

*Victorian medievalism.* See Arthur Dwight Culler, *The Victorian Mirror of History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985), 152–84.

*Ruskinian Gothic.* On Ruskin's influence, see Kristine Ottesen Garrigan, *Ruskin on Architecture: His Thought and Influence* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1973); Roger B. Stein, *John Ruskin and Aesthetic Thought in America, 1840–1900* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967); Culler, *Victorian Mirror of History*, 152–84 (chap. 7, "Ruskin and Victorian Medievalism"). On Morris's influence, see Peter Stansky, *Redesigning the World: William Morris, the 1880s, and the Arts and Crafts* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985); Paul Hardwick, "'Lo, here is felawschipe': Morris, Medievalism, and Christian Socialism in America," in *Worldwide Pre-Raphaelitism*, ed. Thomas J. Tobin (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), 235–52. On the movement, see George L. Hersey, *High Victorian Gothic: A Study in Associationism* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972). On Adams and Ruskin, see Samuels, *Henry Adams*, 335, 440. The term Gothic is infinitely modifiable, by prefacing

it with an adjective: a tally of major variations in this vein upon Gothic could become a book in its own right.

*put the case for Gothic revival*. Much has been published on Pugin as a Gothic revivalist over the past fifteen years. For broad orientation, see Paul Atterbury and Clive Wainwright, *Pugin: A Gothic Passion* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994).

*Employ him by all means*. Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice*, 3 vols. (London: Smith, Elder, 1851–1853), <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/30754/30754-h/30754-h.htm>, 1: 373, appendix 12, “Romanist Modern Art.”

*Raphael*. English for Raffaello Sanzio.

*the Italian painter had been disloyal*. John Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, vol. 2, in idem, *Works*, 4: 85.

*turned for aid and inspiration*. Irene Sargent, “The Opera of ‘Patience’ and ‘The Aesthetic Movement,’” *The Craftsman* 1.1 (October 1901): 33–38, at 35.

*took pains to emphasize*. “The Limits of Mediaeval Guidance,” *New Path* 1.12 (April 1864): 158–60, at 158: “The reform movements [*sic*] of the modern Pre-Raphaelites has been mistaken for an attempted revival of mediaeval Art.”

*read aloud from them*. Dykstra, *Clover Adams*, 79.

*Darwin and Stuart Mill*. Adams, *Democracy*, in Samuels and Samuels, *Novels*, 7 (chap. 1): “Ruskin and Taine had danced merrily through her mind, hand in hand with Darwin and Stuart Mill.”

*landmark in nineteenth-century culture*. John Ruskin, *The Nature of Gothic: A Chapter of The Stones of Venice* (Hammersmith, UK: Kelmscott Press, 1892), I, <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/100235929>: “It is one of the most important things written by the author, and in future days will be considered as one of the very few necessary and inevitable utterances of the century. To some of us when we first read it, now many years ago, it seemed to point out a new road on which the world should travel. And in spite of all the disappointments of forty years, and although some of us, John Ruskin amongst others, have since learned what the equipment for that journey must be, and how many things must be changed before we are equipped, yet we can still see no other way out of the folly and degradation of Civilization. For the lesson which Ruskin here teaches us is that art is the expression of man’s pleasure in labour; that it is possible for man to rejoice in his work, for, strange as it may seem to us to-day, there have been times when he did rejoice in it; and lastly, that unless man’s work once again becomes a pleasure to him, the token of which change will be that beauty is once again a natural and necessary accompaniment of productive labour, all but the worthless must toil in pain, and therefore live in pain.”

*A History of the Gothic Revival*. The full title is *A History of the Gothic Revival: An Attempt to Show How the Taste for Mediaeval Architecture, Which Lingered in England during the Two Last Centuries, Has Since Been Encouraged and Developed* (London: Longmans, Green & Co.; New York: Scribner, Welford & Co. 1872), <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/000411018>. This Eastlake is all too readily confused with his uncle, Charles Lock Eastlake (1793–1865). The reputations and relations of the two are discussed in David Robertson, *Sir Charles Eastlake and the Victorian Art World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978), 401–2.

*Royal Photographic Society*. In Ruskin's time, the Photographic Society of London.

*Modern Gothic Architecture*. London: H. S. King & Co., 1873, <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/100236681>

*Kenneth Clark's Gothic Revival*. Clark, *Gothic Revival*. Throughout I quote from the third edition (London: John Murray, 1962), 7.

*perhaps the one purely English movement*. Clark, *Gothic Revival*, 7.

*Medievalism*. Matthews, "From Mediaeval to Mediaevalism," 704–9. In the orthography of the day, Ruskin wrote "mediaevalism."

*medievalized*. The earliest citation for *medievalize* in the *OED* is from 1854, by an architectural historian: John Louis Petit, *Architectural Studies in France* (London: G. Bell, 1854), <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/008634175>

*which has the greatest effect on the mind*. *The Builder's Magazine: or Monthly Companion for Architects, Carpenters, Masons, Bricklayers, etc. as Well as for Every Gentleman* (London, 1774–1778), 63–64, at 64 (caption for plate 116).

*before the mid-nineteenth century*. On the adoption of Gothic by American Anglicans and others in the first half of the nineteenth century, see Arthur Channing Downs, "America's First 'Medieval' Churches," *Anglican and Episcopal History* 45.2 (1976): 166–76.

*frippery-unfriendly*. See Ryan K. Smith, *Gothic Arches, Latin Crosses: Anti-Catholicism and American Church Designs in the Nineteenth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

*Saint Luke's*. Newport Parish Church, near Smithfield in Isle of Wight County, Virginia. See James Grote Van Derpool, "The Restoration of St. Luke's, Smithfield, Virginia," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 17.1 (1958): 12–18.

*traces in other surviving buildings*. Loth and Sadler, *Only Proper Style*, 3–10.

*Golden type*. Modeled upon the work of the fifteenth-century French printer, Nicolas Jenson.

*Kelmscott Press*. Hammersmith: Printed by William Morris at the Kelmscott Press; London and Orpington: Published by George Allen.

*the great designer recalled*. “To some of us, when we read it, now many years ago, it seemed to point out a new road on which the world would travel.”

*The best spirits of the Revival*. Clark, *Gothic Revival* (1962 ed.), 218–19.

*truly Christian and perfect system*. In this outlook, he harked back to seventeenth-century writers who had seen the Middle Ages as not merely preabsolutist but even antiabsolutist: see Gossman, *Medievalism*, 159. Such political dimensions of the medievalism of the seventeenth century are not covered in Nathan Edelman, *Attitudes of Seventeenth-Century France toward the Middle Ages* (New York: King’s Crown Press, 1946).

*practical socialism*. William Morris, “How I Became a Socialist,” *Justice*, June 16, 1894, in *Collected Works of William Morris*, ed. May Morris, 24 vols. (Longmans, Green, 1910–1915), 23: 277–81, at 279. On Morris’s relationship with Ruskin, see Peter Faulkner, “Ruskin and Morris,” *Journal of the William Morris Society* 14.1 (2000): 6–17.

*hatred of modern civilization*. “Apart from the desire to produce beautiful things, the leading passion of my life has been and is hatred of modern civilization.”

*simplicity*. *The Architect*, December 8, 1877: “Simplicity of life, begetting simplicity of taste, that is, a love for sweet and lofty things is of all matters most necessary for the birth of the new and better art we crave for; simplicity everywhere in the palace as well as in the cottage.” Quoted by Maureen Meister, *Arts and Crafts: History and Heritage in New England* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2014), 41; for other English pronouncements on simplicity, see pp. 49, 50–51.

*Babbitttry*. Jennifer Harris, “William Morris and the Middle Ages,” in *William Morris and the Middle Ages: A Collection of Essays, Together with a Catalogue of Works Exhibited at the Whitworth Art Gallery, 28 September–8 December 1984*, ed. Joanna Banham and Jennifer Harris (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1984), 1–17. The noun ‘Babbitttry’ relates to American rather than British literature, but it is more useful here than any substitute I have been able to locate.

*wood engraving*. From a drawing by C. M. Gere.

*Kelmscott Manor*. In Gloucestershire in the Cotswolds.

*Morris’s influence penetrated deeply*. Wendy Kaplan, “The Art That Is Life”: *The Arts and Crafts Movement in America, 1875–1920* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1987); Lindsay



Leard-Coolidge, "William Morris and Nineteenth-century Boston," in *William Morris: Centenary Essays. Papers from the Morris Centenary Conference Organized by the William Morris Society at Exeter College Oxford, 30 June-3 July 1996*, ed. Peter Faulkner and Peter Preston (Exeter, UK: University of Exeter Press, 1999), 156–64.

*as it evolved in Normandy*. Gavin Stamp, "High Victorian Gothic and the Architecture of Normandy," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 62.2 (2003): 194–211, esp. 196, 200–201.

*especially thermodynamics*. Greg Myers, "Nineteenth-Century Popularizations of Thermodynamics and the Rhetoric of Social Prophecy," *Victorian Studies* 29 (1985): 35–66.

*Clarence King*. Mane, *Henry Adams*, 25–33.

*one good Turner deserves another*. Friedrich, *Clover*, 241; Sandweiss, *Passing Strange*, 110.

*served as a conduit*. Dickason, *Daring Young Men*, 5, 92, 144; see also Ernest Samuels, *Henry Adams: The Middle Years* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1958), 238–39, 244.

*American Pre-Raphaelites*. Dickason, *Daring Young Men*, 5 (on the magazine), 72 (on their designation as American Pre-Raphaelites), 92–98 (on Clarence King). The name of the group was "New Path," so called after the name of a little magazine put out by the "Society for the Advancement of Truth in Art."

*John La Farge*. On La Farge and the Pre-Raphaelites, see Dickason, *Daring Young Men*, 144–53; Scheyer, *Circle of Henry Adams*, 184–86.

*outstanding members of the P.R.B.*. Scheyer, *Circle of Henry Adams*, 184–85.

## Richardsonian Romanesque

*its tower was completed in 1877*. Susan Wilson, *Boston Sites and Insights: An Essential Guide to Historic Landmarks in and around Boston*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004), 127.

*stained glass windows*. On the windows, see Julie L. Sloan and James L. Yarnall, "John La Farge and the Stained-Glass Windows in Memorial Hall at Harvard University," *The Magazine Antiques* 141 (April 1992): 642–51.

*Ruskinian influences*. On Ruskin's influence, see James Stevens Curl, *A Dictionary of Architecture and Landscape Architecture*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 834–35 ("Ware and van Brunt").

*Discourses on Architecture*. For the translation, see Eugène Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc, *Discourses on Architecture*, trans. Henry Van Brunt (Boston: J. R. Osgood, 1875). Additionally, see *À la recherche de Viollet-le-Duc: Écrits de H. van Brunt*, ed. Geert Bekaert, Collection architecture + recherches, vol. 12 (Brussels: Pierre Mardaga, 1980).

*American Renaissance*. Cram, *My Life in Architecture*, 31.

*comprehensive Protestant church*. Curran, *Romanesque Revival*, 261. See also James F. O’Gorman, ed., *The Makers of Trinity Church in the City of Boston* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2004).

*an architectural term*. *An Inquiry into the Origin and Influence of Gothic Architecture* (London: Longman, 1819), passim: see Georg Germann, *Gothic Revival in Europe and Britain: Sources, Influences, and Ideas*, trans. Gerald Onn (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1972), 44.

*located on Lafayette Square*. The houses stood at the corner of H and Sixteenth Streets. They were constructed on a commission given in early 1884. O’Toole, *Five of Hearts*, 141–46; for good architectural and historical information on the houses, pp. 120–23.

*less than four months later*. Richardson died on April 27, 1886.

*they became fast friends only later*. Adams, *EHA*, chap. 4, “Harvard College (1854–1858),” 778: “Certainly Adams made no acquaintance there that he valued in after life so much as Richardson, but still more certainly the college relation had little to do with the later friendship.”

*a direct debt to Richardson*. Letter to Elizabeth Cameron, Paris, September 18, 1899, in *LHA*, 5: 31–34, at 32: “I am now all eleventh and twelfth century... I caught the disease from dear old Richardson who was the only really big man I ever knew.” The passage was quoted by Ernst Scheyer, “Henry Adams and Henry Hobson Richardson,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 12.1 (1953): 7–12, at 12.

*negotiations with him*. Dykstra, *Clover Adams*, 170.

*loosely anticipated*. Van Wyck Brooks, *New England: Indian Summer, 1865–1915* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1940), <https://archive.org/details/newenglandindian00broo>, 354.

*refute the invocation*. Marc Friedlaender, “Henry Hobson Richardson, Henry Adams, and John Hay,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 29.3 (1970): 231–46, at 244.

*even well-bred horses shy at his buildings*. Henry Hobson Richardson, Letter to Henry Adams, July 6, 1885, cited by Kaledin, *Education of Mrs. Henry Adams*, 198.

*Muscular Gothic*. Robert Kerr, *Gentleman's House*, cited by Aldrich, *Gothic Revival*, 212, without specification of pages. I have not located "muscular Gothic" in the book, although "muscular ugliness" is applied in reference to Gothic on p. 372. On the early usage of the expression, see David Rosen, "The Volcano and the Cathedral: Muscular Christianity and the Origins of Primal Manliness," in *Muscular Christianity: Embodying the Victorian Age*, ed. Donald E. Hall, Cambridge Studies in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 17–44.

### Saint John the Divine and Trinity Church

*Cram took over*. See Loth and Sadler, *Only Proper Style*, 149–51. Cram's admiration for Henry Adams and particularly for *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres* comes to the fore in Ralph Adams Cram, *The Substance of Gothic: Six Lectures on the Development of Architecture* (Boston: Marshall Jones, 1917), <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/000454563>, xxiii, 134, 146.

*the largest in the world*. This point has been made by Emery, "Postcolonial Gothic," 241. The last volume in which the claim was lodged was *Guinness World Records 2005* (London: Guinness World Records, 2004), 906.

*negotiations*. Emery, "Postcolonial Gothic," 237–64.

*The place has no heart*. Samuels and Samuels, *Novels*, 234.

*often visited*. Vandersee, "User"; O'Toole, *Five of Hearts*, 134.

*Museum of Fine Arts*. See Neil Harris, "The Gilded Age Revisited: Boston and the Museum Movement," *American Quarterly* 14 (1962): 545–66, at 556–58.

### Cathedral Culture

*People in those old times had convictions*. Heinrich Heine, *Über die französische Bühne, Vertraute Briefe an August Lewald*, Letter 9 (1837), in idem, *Historisch-kritische Gesamtausgabe der Werke*, ed. Manfred Windfuhr, 16 vols. in 23 (Hamburg, Germany: Hoffmann und Campe, 1973), 12.1: 273–83, at 279; for the English, Heinrich Heine, "Confidential Letters Addressed to M. August Lewald," Letter 9, in *The Works of Heinrich Heine*, trans. Charles Godfrey Leland (Hans Breitmann), 12 vols. (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1906), 4 (1906): 242–64, at 255.

*thirteenth-century colored glass*. Scheyer, *Circle of Henry Adams*, 57–58.

*La Cathédrale*. Paris, Musée Rodin; Philadelphia, Rodin Museum.

*The Arch of Alliance*. In French, "L'arche d'alliance."

*the Gothic cathedrals of France*. Auguste Rodin, “The Gothic in the Cathedrals and Churches of France,” *The North American Review* 180.579 (1905): 219–29; repr. as “The Gothic in France,” in *The North American Review* 207.746 (1918): 111–21. See further Auguste Rodin and Charles Morice, *Les cathédrales de France* (Paris: A. Colin, 1914), for an English translation of which, see Auguste Rodin and Charles Morice, *Cathedrals of France*, trans. Elisabeth Chase Geissbuhler (Redding Ridge, CT: Black Swan Books, 1981). See also Aida Audeh, “I Tre Fiorentini: Rodin’s Three Shades and Their Origin in Medieval Illustrations of Dante’s Inferno 15 and 16,” *Dante Studies* 117 (1999): 133–69; Albert Edward Elsen, *The Gates of Hell by Auguste Rodin* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1985), esp. 13–34. For recent responses by an artist to Rodin’s cathedral book and art, see Sophie Biass Fabiani et al., eds., *Kiefer Rodin* (Paris: Gallimard, 2017).

*conditioned by the atmosphere of their times*. Tehan, *Henry Adams in Love*, 198.

*Joris-Karl Huysmans*. Elizabeth Emery, “J.-K. Huysmans, Medievalist,” *Modern Language Studies* 30.2 (2000): 119–31.

*Adams quotes from it extensively*. Scheyer, *Circle of Henry Adams*, 23. Adams’s copy of the English translation is still extant: Baym, *French Education*, 178.

*Saint Lydwine of Schiedam*. On Huysmans’s *Sainte Lydwine de Schiedam*, see Elizabeth Emery, “Ecrire la fin: Sainte Lydwine de Schiedam de J.-K. Huysmans,” *Les cahiers naturalistes* 47.75 (September 2001): 203–14.

*The Crowds of Lourdes*. In French, *Les foules de Lourdes*.

## Kenneth Clark

*palette and standards of his own times*. Clark, *Gothic Revival*, vii: “The real reason why the Gothic Revival has been neglected is that it produced so little on which our eyes can rest without pain.”

*relating poorly to its environs*. Clark, *Gothic Revival*, 215.

*applied them to purely commercial functions*. Adams, *Law of Civilization and Decay*, 2nd ed. (1896), 338 (chap. 12, “Conclusion”): “The ecstatic dream, which some twelfth-century monk cut into the stone of the sanctuary, hallowed by the presence of his God, is reproduced to bedizen a warehouse; or the plan of an abbey, which Saint Hugh may have consecrated, is adapted to a railway station.”

*What a wilderness of deplorable architecture!* Turner, *Campus*, 215–47; Clark, *Gothic Revival*, 214: “We can never forget the Gothic Revival. It changed the face of England, building and restoring churches all over the countryside, and filling our towns with Gothic banks and grocers, Gothic lodging-houses and insurance companies, Gothic

everything, from a town-hall down to a slum public-house... There cannot be a main street in England quite untouched by the Revival..."

*does not refer once*. His index omits the names of any American colleges or universities, such as Bryn Mawr, Chicago, Princeton, and Yale. The only Duke is the Duke of York's Column.

*sham Gothic shell*. Gerald Heard, "Archimedes or Science in the School," *The Architectural Review* 74 (1933): 222–27, at 223 (and in part as a caption at 222): "Its scholastic spirit, a spirit of pedantry and precedent, was naturally materialized in a crabbed late Gothic and at most, as addition, a little Queen-Annery to bear witness to the scholiasm of a Bentley. Even the schools which were not Gothic foundations insisted on confining themselves in Gothically-revived cells, as the hermit crab seeks for a twisted shell in which to case itself." The criticism may be leveled at more than just English Baroque architecture, known in Britain as Queen Anne style, or the early twentieth-century recrudescence of it in the Queen Anne revival: the invocation of Anne in which may be misogynist. The passage has been cited by R. A. Lowe, "Building the Ivory Tower: The Social Functions of Late Nineteenth Century Collegiate Architecture," *Studies in Higher Education* 7.2 (1982): 81–91, at 91.



## Notes to Chapter 4

*Cram and his followers.* Loth and Sadler, *Only Proper Style*, 154.

### Our Lady's Tumbler in Boston Bohemia

*to revive English Perpendicular Gothic.* Ralph Adams Cram, *Church Building: A Study of the Principles of Architecture in Their Relation to the Church* (Boston: Small, Maynard & Co. 1901), <https://archive.org/details/churchbuildinga03cramgoog>, 43: "There is one style, and only one, that we have a right to: and that is Gothic as it was when all art was destroyed at the time of the Reformation." No mealy-mouthed maundering here!

*this youth movement of the eighties.* Cram, *My Life in Architecture*, 13.

*banned in Boston.* On the "banned in Boston" phenomenon, see Neil Miller, *Banned in Boston: The Watch and Ward Society's Crusade against Books, Burlesque, and the Social Evil* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2010).

*Bostonian bohemianism.* For broader context, see Stephen Maxfield Parrish, *Currents of the Nineties in Boston and London: Fred Holland Day, Louise Imogen Guiney, and Their Circle* (New York: Garland, 1987), and especially Douglass Shand-Tucci, *Boston Bohemia 1881–1900: Ralph Adams Cram* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995).

*the mood of the cloister.* Herbert Sussman, "The Pre-Raphaelites and the 'Mood of the Cloister,'" *Browning Institute Studies* 8 (1980): 45–55.

*Knight Errant.* Full title, *A Quarter-Yearly Review of the Liberal Arts Called the Knight Errant, Being a Magazine of Appreciation*. On the *Knight Errant*, see Susan Otis Thompson, *American Book Design and William Morris*, 2nd ed. (New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll Press, 1996), 38–54 (for the quotation, see [p. xx]); Joe Walker Kraus, *Messrs. Copeland & Day, 69 Cornhill, Boston, 1893–1899* (Philadelphia, PA: George S. MacManus, 1979), 3–4. At this stage in his life, Cram betrayed some signs of being particularly drawn to the Virgin by contributing Mariana twice to the journal. In the second issue, he offered "Two Sonnets for Pictures of Our Lady" that were inspired by paintings by Botticelli and Fra Angelico. In the third issue, he supplied a meditation upon the "Hail, Mary" that took as its point of departure a musical composition by a Franco-Belgian composer, Jacques Arcadelt: "An Ave Maria of Arcadelt," *Knight Errant* 1.3 (October 1892): 72.

*including bookcraft.* Nancy Finlay, *Artists of the Book in Boston, 1890–1910* (Cambridge, MA: Department of Printing and Graphic Arts, The Houghton Library, Harvard College Library, 1985).

*they were not in the vanguard.* “The *Knight Errant* neither claims to be first nor hopes to be foremost in the new Quest; the standard has been raised in England...”

*short existence.* It operated from 1891 to 1898.

*Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue.* Ralph Adams Cram, “Partnership,” in *Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue: Architect and Master of Many Arts*, ed. Charles Harris Whitaker (New York: Press of the American Institute of Architects, 1925), 28–33, at 31, describes Goodhue: “The breadth of his sympathy and the extent and variety of his fancy were preternatural. He would design a font of type or a sumptuous set of initials as quickly as he would clothe an architectural form with the splendid vesture of intricate Gothic ornament.”

*Fred Holland Day.* Trevor J. Fairbrother, *Making a Presence: F. Holland Day in Artistic Photography* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012), 15. See also Thomas G. Boss, “Copeland and Day and the Art of Bookmaking,” in *New Perspectives on F. Holland Day: Selected Presentations from the Fred Holland Day in Context Symposium*, Stonehill College, ed. Patricia J. Fanning (North Easton, MA: Massachusetts Foundation for the Humanities, 1998), 17–24, at 17. On Morris and Day, see Kraus, *Messrs. Copeland & Day*, 31–32.

*The Gothic Quest.* Ralph Adams Cram, *The Gothic Quest* (New York: Baker & Taylor, 1907), <https://archive.org/details/gothicquest00cram>. See Charlotte H. Oberg, “Ralph Adams Cram: Last Knight of the Gothic Quest,” in *History and Community: Essays in Victorian Medievalism*, ed. Florence S. Boos, Garland Reference Library of the Humanities, vol. 1563 (New York: Garland, 1992), 169–208.

*The ranks of the visionists.* The *Knight Errant* was run on Elzevir Press, managed by the printer Francis Watts Lee (see Fig. n.11). See Patricia J. Fanning, “Francis Watts Lee: A Reintroduction,” *History of Photography* 36.1 (2012): 15–32. On Lee’s admiration for Morris, see Francis Watts Lee, ed., *William Morris: Poet, Artist, Socialist*, 2nd ed. (New York: Humboldt, 1891), vii–ix. The fullest study is now Patricia J. Fanning, *Artful Lives: The Francis Watts Lee Family and Their Times* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2016). Likewise involved in the publication was Herbert Copeland, a Harvard graduate from the class of 1891 (see Fig. n.12). At the time he served on the editorial staff of *The Youth’s Companion*, a Boston-based children’s magazine that existed for over a century, from 1827 to 1929. See Kraus, *Messrs. Copeland & Day*, 5–7.



Fig. n.11 Francis Watts Lee. Photograph by Gertrude Käsebier, ca. 1899–1910. Washington, DC, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Francis Watts Lee Collection.



Fig. n.12 Herbert Copeland. Photograph by Fred Holland Day, ca. 1899–1902. Washington, DC, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, the Louise Imogen Guiney Collection.

*more casual associates*. Consider the art historian and dealer Bernard Berenson and the philosopher George Santayana. Also participating were established figures such as the art historian Charles Eliot Norton, cousin of Charles William Eliot, the president of the university. See Cram, *My Life in Architecture*, 83–95; Patricia J. Fanning, “Fred Holland Day: Eccentric Aesthete,” *The New England Quarterly* 53 (1980): 230–36, at 231; Parrish, *Currents*, 1–2. Some of the Harvardians are covered in Douglass Shand-Tucci, *The Crimson Letter: Harvard, Homosexuality, and the Shaping of American Culture* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2003), *passim*.

## Charles Eliot Norton

*Ruskin*. Eventually he would become Ruskin's literary executor.

*corresponded with Dante Gabriel Rossetti*. As early as 1858: see Scheyer, *Circle of Henry Adams*, 30.

*gifts of actual medieval manuscripts*. McClintock, "Classroom and the Courtyard," 45.

*moral regeneration of the US*. Linda C. Dowling, *Charles Eliot Norton: The Art of Reform in Nineteenth-Century America* (Hanover: University Press of New England, for University of New Hampshire Press, 2007), xiv. Extremely useful for comparing and contrasting Norton and Adams is Michael W. Brooks, "New England Gothic: Charles Eliot Norton, Charles H. Moore, and Henry Adams," in *The Architectural Historian in America: A Symposium in Celebration of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Founding of the Society of Architectural Historians*, ed. Elisabeth Blair MacDougall, Studies in the History of Art, vol. 35/Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts, vol. 19 (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1990), 113–25.

*Norton's turn to medievalism*. For a brief consideration of Norton's outlook on the Middle Ages, see Kathleen Verduin, "The Medievalism of Charles Eliot Norton," in *Makers of the Middle Ages: Essays in Honor of William Calin*, ed. Richard Utz and Elizabeth Emery (Kalamazoo, MI: Studies in Medievalism, Western Michigan University, 2011), 81–84. In 1880 Norton contributed to the rise of interest in the medieval period with his *Historical Studies of Church-Building in the Middle Ages*.

*democracies in miniature*. On this viewpoint, see Rosemary Jann, "Democratic Myths in Victorian Medievalism," *Browning Institute Studies* 8 (1980): 129–49, especially 142–47 (on Morris).

*his study of medieval church-building*. Charles Eliot Norton, *Historical Studies of Church-Building in the Middle Ages: Venice, Siena, Florence* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1880).

*cathedral-raising culture*. Charles Eliot Norton, *Notes of Travel and Study in Italy* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1859), 102–3: "The building of cathedrals is, in truth, one of the main features of the social history of Europe during the Middle Ages. In England, in Spain, in France, in the Low Countries, in Germany, in Italy, in Sicily, these magnificent monuments of genius and devotion rose in rapid succession during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. By a great impulse of popular energy, by a long combination of popular effort with trained skill, cathedrals, each requiring almost the revenues of a kingdom for its construction, sprang up from the soil in the hearts of scores of rival cities. There have been no works of architecture in later times comparable with them in grandeur of design, in elaborateness of detail, in that broad unity of conception

which, while leaving the largest scope for the play of fancy the exercise of special ability by every workman, subordinated the multifarious differences of parts into one harmonious whole. The true cathedral architecture partook of the qualities which Nature displays in her noblest works,—out of infinite varieties of general resembling, but intrinsically differing parts, creating a perfect and concordant result.”

*a blossoming in stone.* Ralph Waldo Emerson, “History,” in idem, *Essays: First and Second Series* (New York: Library of America, 2010), 5–26, at 16. The passage continues poetically: “The mountain of granite blooms into an eternal flower, with the lightness and delicate finish, as well as the aerial proportions and perspective of vegetable beauty.”

*simplicity and sincerity.* Meister, *Arts and Crafts*, 81–83.

*promoting medievalism.* Dowling, *Charles Eliot Norton*, xix (on his impact on Goodhue); Scheyer, *Circle of Henry Adams*, 30; David Weir, *Decadent Culture in the United States: Art and Literature against the American Grain (1890–1926)* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008), 53.

*Dante Society.* The first president was Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, the second James Russell Lowell, and the third Norton himself.

*purchasing several manuscripts of the Italian poet’s works.* McClintock, “Classroom and the Courtyard,” 46.

*blend into Adams’s.* Norton and Adams show other strong parallels, less in the exact natures of their respective medievalisms than in their many-layered responses to the deaths of their beloved wives: Norton’s died in childbirth in 1872, after ten years of marriage and six children. See Dowling, *Charles Eliot Norton*, xvii.

## *The Knight Errant and Copeland & Day*

*the crowning achievement of bohemia.* For the quotation, Parrish, *Currents*, 94n101.

*imitation of manuscripts from the Middle Ages.* Meister, *Arts and Crafts*, 19.

*On the cover.* The cover was designed by Goodhue.

*toward a lofty castle.* The Castle Perilous.

*programmatic statement.* *Knight Errant* 1.1 (1892): 1: “It is no longer to strive against the Paynim in the Holy Land, to contend with ravaging dragons, to succour forlorn ladies in distress that he is called to action, but rather to war against the Paynims of realism in art, to assail the dragon of materialism, and the fierce dragon of mammonism, to ride for the succour of forlorn hopes and the restoration of forgotten ideals.”



*as mediaeval as possible*. Letter to Herbert E. Clarke, April 21, 1892, in Louise Imogen Guiney, *Letters*, ed. Grace Guiney, 2 vols. (New York: Harper and Row, 1926), 1: 30–33, at 31.

*most degenerate days. Modern Knight Errantry*. Brysson Cunningham, “Modern Knight Errantry,” *Strand Magazine: An Illustrated Monthly* 10 (London, July 1895): 424–30, at 425.

*the line between a knight errant and an arrant knave*. Etymology furnishes all the proof the heart or mind could desire, since both adjectives derive ultimately from the same Latin word: the verb *erro*, *-are* means first and foremost “to wander” or “to go off course.”

*flower and sharp-pointed rose parts*. Vernica M. Downey, “The Cover Design,” *The Library Quarterly: Information, Community, Policy* 78 (2008): 467–69.

*antagonistic environment*. Weir, *Decadent Culture*, 72.

*other private presses in England*. On Day himself, see Estelle Jussim, *Slave to Beauty: The Eccentric Life and Controversial Career of F. Holland Day, Photographer, Publisher, Aesthete* (Boston: David R. Godine, 1981); James Crump, *F. Holland Day: Suffering the Ideal* (Santa Fe, NM: Twin Palms Publishers, 1995); Pam Roberts, “Fred Holland Day (1864–1933),” in *F. Holland Day*, ed. idem et al. (Zwolle, Netherlands: Waanders; Amsterdam: Van Gogh Museum, 2000), 11–28. On the firm of Copeland & Day, see Kraus, *Messrs. Copeland & Day*; Jussim, *Slave to Beauty*, 61–73, 83–87.

*met Morris*. Jussim, *Slave to Beauty*, 54.

*The Yellow Book*. Published by John Lane and Charles Elkin Mathews’s The Bodley Head, founded in 1887. On *The Yellow Book* and its influence, see Mark Samuels Lasner, *The Yellow Book: A Centenary Exhibition* (Cambridge, MA: Houghton Library, 1994).

*The Decadent Movement in Literature*. Still earlier, from 1886 to 1889, a periodical entitled *Le Décadent* had been published in French.

*put on sportive airs*. The former professor of Harvard University showed himself conversant about different manifestations of this cultural syndrome over the millennia. Ancient Roman decadence was one, Rodin’s another, and his own time’s a third. On Rodin’s decadence, see Letter to Elizabeth Cameron, August 29, 1895, in *LHA*, 4: 311–13, at 313. For a discussion of Adams’s familiarity with decadents, see Baym, *French Education*, 164–65. In the fall of 1895, he wondered aloud to Elizabeth Cameron in a letter from Paris: “Why can we decadents never take the comfort and satisfaction of our decadence?” See Letter to Elizabeth Cameron, September 25, 1895, in *LHA*, 4: 330–33, at 332.

*The Decadent*. The subtitle is the discursive *Being the Gospel of Inaction, wherein Are Set Forth in Romance Form Certain Reflections Touching the Curious Characteristics of These Ultimate Years, and the Divers Causes Thereof*.

*tour of the United States*. Roy Morris Jr., *Declaring His Genius: Oscar Wilde in North America* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2013).

*revolted*. They always had innovative text layout and fine letterpress typography. In many cases their products were bound with hand-tooled leather covers. In the case of *The Decadent*, 110 copies were printed on yellow French handmade paper and fifteen on thick Lalanne paper.

*one hundred volumes*. The press achieved the highest recognition (much of it unfavorable) for its publication in 1895 of Stephen Crane's *The Black Riders and Other Lines*.

*Arts and Crafts movement in Boston*. Boss, "Copeland and Day," 17.

*smaller Kelmscott printed works*. On the relationship in design and production between *This Is of Aucassin and Nicolette: A Song-Tale of True Lovers*, trans. M. S. Henry, versified by Edward W. Thomson (Boston: Copeland & Day, 1896, 1897), and *Our Lady's Tumbler*, see Kraus, *Messrs. Copeland & Day*, 40, 49.

*The Treasure of the Humble*. Trans. Alfred Sutro (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1897), 1–21; see Kristin Schwain, *Signs of Grace: Religion and American Art in the Gilded Age* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008), 90.

*Books Beautiful, but Not Dear*. *New York Times: Saturday Review of Books and Art, Supplement*, May 20, 1899, p. 328.

*unsold Copeland & Day stock*. *Our Lady's Tumbler: A Tale of Mediaeval France/Translated into English from the Old French* by Isabel Butler, 2nd ed. (Boston: Small, Maynard., 1899). Boss, "Copeland and Day," 18. On the lack of profit, see Roberts, "Fred Holland Day," 15, and on the purchase, Thompson, *American Book Design*, xx.

## Fred Holland Day

*tableaux vivants*. The series resulted in more than 250 photographs, the most famous of which was *The Last Seven Words of Christ*. Day and his crew staged the scenes on a hillside 20 miles outside Boston, with costumes and sets that he claimed were historically accurate and even based on archaeological investigation. These photos belong to the pictorialist style. Through such techniques as apparent blurring or lack of focus, pictorialism brings home that the photographer not merely records reality but even manipulates it. See Kristin Schwain, "F. Holland Day's *Seven Last Words* and the Religious Roots of American Modernism," *American Art* 19 (2005): 32–59, revised in Schwain, *Signs of Grace*, 71–103.

*representation of the Virgin Mary.* Amédée Ayfre, "La Vierge Marie et le cinéma," in *Maria: Études sur la Sainte Vierge*, ed. Hubert Du Manoir de Juaye, 7 vols. (Paris: Beauchesne, 1949–1964), 5: 793–810, at 802–3. In 1897, two films appeared in France (one of them filmed at Oberammergau), and one each in Italy, Great Britain, and the United States (with the final one also being filmed at Oberammergau). Other footage followed in 1898, 1902–1907, 1905, 1906, and 1907, in France, Great Britain, and the United States.

*protected filmmakers.* Roland Cosandey et al., eds., *Une invention du diable?: Cinéma des premiers temps et religion = An Invention of the Devil?: Religion and Early Cinema* (Sainte-Foy, France: Presses de l'Université Laval, 1992).

*twice lent to exhibitions.* In 1892 and 1895. See Schwain, *Signs of Grace*, 73.

*Two Sonnets for Pictures of Our Lady.* 1.2 (1892): 44–45 (sonnets) and 1.3 (1892): 72 ("An Ave Maria of Arcadelt").

*Gothic Chapel of Saint Gabriel the Archangel.* Patricia J. Fanning, *Norwood: A History* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia, 2002), 54; idem, *Through an Uncommon Lens: The Life and Photography of F. Holland Day* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2008), 12.

*Cram, Goodhue and Ferguson.* The first two principals were both friends of Day. Cram, as his place in the listing of names would suggest, was the lead architect.

*Passion play at Oberammergau.* Anne E. Havinga, "Setting the Time of Day in Boston," in Roberts et al., *F. Holland Day*, 29–39, at 30; Jussim, *Slave to Beauty*, 41–42; and, in greatest detail, Schwain, *Signs of Grace*, 71, 78–79. The performance that Day witnessed was documented in William T. Stead, *The Story That Transformed the World; or, The Passion Play at Ober Ammergau in 1890* (London: Review of Reviews, 1890).

*a crowd of summer-tourists.* Letter to Albert Stanburrough Cook, August 6, 1910, in *LHA*, 6: 356–57, at 357.

*travel agency.* After a decade of efforts, Cook honed his skills in arranging excursions during the Great Exhibition in London in 1851, eventually forming with his son the agency known as Thomas Cook and Son, which extended its reach in both domestic and foreign travel.

*Day wrote "short treatises."* Fairbrother, *Making a Presence*, 17.

*exotic apparel and fancy dress.* Fairbrother, *Making a Presence*, 100.

*meant to hark back to the late Middle Ages.* It was intended to recall the two and a half centuries from 1400 to 1650. Havinga, "Setting the Time of Day," 37, fig. 24; Fairbrother, *Making a Presence*, 24, 31; Jussim, *Slave to Beauty*, 7, 55.

*zest for remote earlier times*. For general background, consider Adams, *Dandies and Desert Saints: Styles of Victorian Manhood* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995).

*manuscript painting*. Paris, Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal, MS 601 (dated 1450).

*Medieval Academy of America*. The initial adjective was at first spelled Mediaeval.

*Saint Botolph’s Island*. The name of the isle alluded to the famous parish church of Boston in England, St. Botolph’s, known popularly as the Boston Stump.

*open-air theater*. Cram describes the episode fleetingly in *My Life in Architecture*, 204–5, and it is discussed in Douglass Shand-Tucci, *Ralph Adams Cram: Life and Architecture*, 2 vols. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995–2005), 2: 181–82. The fullest details are in the twenty-nine-page booklet entitled *Report Made to the Boston Society of Architects by Its Committee on Municipal Improvement* (Boston: A. Mudge, 1907).

*MIT*. The three letters stand for the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

*he collected the Belgian playwright’s works*. On his collecting of Maeterlinck, see Fairbrother, *Making a Presence*, 14. For images, see Verna Posever Curtis, “Actors and Adolescents: The Idealised Eye of F. H. Day,” in Roberts et al., *F. Holland Day*, 39–52, at 42, fig. 28, and 44; Fairbrother, *Making a Presence*, 106, fig. 26.

*passionate medievalizer*. He wrote poems on Arthurian subjects, including Lancelot, Guenevere, Galahad, Merlin, and the Grail, as well as on other topics, such as the legendary early Welsh poet Taliesin.

*translated some of Maeterlinck’s plays*. *The Plays of Maurice Maeterlinck*, trans. Richard Hovey, 2nd ed. (Chicago: Stone and Kimball, 1895). Hovey prefaced his translation with an introduction on the playwright’s place within symbolism.

*Cram had much in common*. Lears, *No Place of Grace*, 205: “Cram presented medieval Europe as an aesthetic, religious, and social paradise lost where all men were artists, all women revered, and all social classes bound in an ‘organic,’ deferential social order.”

*You’ve got to live your own life*. Letter from Guiney to Day, October 12, 1898, in the papers of Louise Imogen Guiney in Washington, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, quoted by Fairbrother, *Making a Presence*, 29.

## Ralph Adams Cram, *Great Goth Almighty*

*Cram’s model for art*. Clark, “Ralph Adams Cram,” 212.

*Ralph Adams Cram*. The exhaustive treatment of Cram is Shand-Tucci, *Ralph Adams Cram*. For the architect’s own account of his negotiations with Adams to secure the publication of the book, see, among his multitudinous publications, Cram, *My Life in Architecture*, 226–29.

*heart and soul of the Middle Ages*. Cram, *My Life in Architecture*, 226.

*liberating, innovative, and democratic*. Clark, "Ralph Adams Cram," 206, 213.

*prescribed Adams's portrayal of Chartres*. Ralph Adams Cram, "Editor's Note," in Henry Adams, *Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1913), <https://archive.org/details/MontSaintMichelAndChartres>, v–viii, at vii–viii: "To live for a day in a world that built Chartres Cathedral, even if it makes the living in a world that creates the 'Black Country' of England or an Iron City of America less a thing of joy and gladness than before, equally opens up the far prospect of another thirteenth century in the times that are to come and urges to ardent action toward its attainment."

*the most factional*. Americans today should still beware of yielding to old stereotypes when assessing the relations between the Old and New Worlds. Be ignorant of history at your great peril, but judge the present on its own terms.

*connector between Gothic and nature*. Ruskin, *Stones of Venice*, 3: 60 (chap. 2, "Roman Renaissance"): "The Gothic had fellowship with all hearts, and was universal, like nature: it could frame a temple for the prayer of nations, or shrink into the poor man's winding stair."

*Louis Sullivan*. Narciso G. Menocal, "Louis Sullivan's Use of the Gothic: From Skyscrapers to Banks," in *Medievalism in American Culture: Papers of the Eighteenth Annual Conference of the Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies*, ed. Bernard Rosenthal and Paul E. Szarmach, *Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies*, vol. 55 (Binghamton: Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, State University of New York at Binghamton, 1989), 215–50, at 222.

*relationship between Gothic and nature*. Lauren S. Weingarden, *Louis H. Sullivan and a 19th-Century Poetics of Naturalized Architecture* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2009), 71–96.

*skyscraper Gothic*. Menocal, "Louis Sullivan's Use of the Gothic"; Kevin D. Murphy and Lisa Reilly, eds., *Skyscraper Gothic: Medieval Style and Modernist Buildings* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2017).

*Olmsted Brothers*. John Charles Olmsted and Frederick Law Olmsted Jr.

*carefully built landscape, especially gardens*. Already in the first half of the eighteenth century, professional pattern-books offered models for the ornamentation of both buildings and gardens in Gothic style. A modestly successful case in point would be Batty Langley's (1696–1751) *Ancient Architecture Restored and Improved by a Great Variety of Grand and Useful Designs, Entirely New in the Gothick Mode for the Ornamenting of Buildings and Gardens* (London, 1742). The book was reissued with a title change that emphasized the Gothic element: *Gothic Architecture, Improved by Rules and Proportions: In Many Grand Designs of Columns, Doors, Windows* (London: J. Millan, 1747). On



Langley, see Alistair Rowan, “Batty Langley’s Gothic,” in *Studies in Memory of David Talbot Rice*, ed. Giles Robertson and George Henderson (Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press, 1975), 197–215. On such pattern-books, see Michael McCarthy, *The Origins of the Gothic Revival* (New Haven, CT: Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 1987), 4–11.

*four extraordinary Macdonald sisters.* Judith Flanders, *A Circle of Sisters: Alice Kipling, Georgiana Burne-Jones, Agnes Poynter and Louisa Baldwin* (London: Viking, 2001).

*Have We a Ruskin among Us?* The piece appeared in the *Boston Evening Transcript*. Cram, *My Life in Architecture*, 10.

*Cram reigned without question.* For an overview of the key works undertaken by the architect, see Ethan Anthony, *The Architecture of Ralph Adams Cram and His Office* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2007).

*the American Goth.* *Time: The Weekly News Magazine* 8.24, December 13, 1926.

*redemption of the word Gothic.* In the inaugural issue of the short-lived *Knight Errant* 1 (1892): 14.

*a little town.* *Princeton Alumni Weekly*, December 13, 1902, 200, quoted by Turner, *Campus*, 227.

*generative hives.* For the background to such views of monasteries, see Sussman, “Pre-Raphaelites.”

*fiction accredited by illusion.* *The World as Will and Idea*, trans. R. B. Haldane and J. Kemp, 3 vols., 6th ed. (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1909), 3: 191, 192.

*less antithetical.* “Table Talk,” June 29, 1833, in *Specimens of the Table Talk of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Henry Nelson Coleridge (2nd ed., 1836), ed. Carl Woodring, 2 vols., in *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, vol. 14, ed. Kathleen Coburn, Bollingen Series, vol. 75 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), 2: 235: “The principle of the Gothic architecture is Infinity made imaginable. It is, no doubt, a sublimer effort of genius than the Greek style; but then it depends much more on execution for its effect.”

*Greek museums and Gothic steeples.* *Moralising Criticism and Critical Morality: A Contribution to German Cultural History contra Karl Heinzen* (1847), reprinted in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works*, trans. Jack Cohen et al., 50 vols. (New York: International Publishers, 1975–2004), 6 (1976): 312–40, at 328: “Civil servants and priests, soldiers and ballet-dancers, schoolmasters and police constables, Greek museums and Gothic steeples, civil list and services list—the common seed within which all these fabulous beings slumber in embryo is taxation.”

*ordered artificiality of ancient Greek architecture*. In a late poem entitled “The Cathedral,” James Russell Lowell griped: “The Grecian gluts me with its perfectness.” Dora Wiebenson, “Greek, Gothic and Nature: 1750–1810,” in *Essays in Honor of Walter Friedlaender*, Marsyas: Studies in the History of Art, Supplement, vol. 2 (New York: Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, 1965): 187–94. For complicating information and perspectives on the early eighteenth century, see George Clarke, “Grecian Taste and Gothic Virtue: Lord Cobham’s Gardening Programme and Its Iconography,” *Apollo* 97 (1973): 566–71.

*compass for newness*. At this stage in life, Lowell was more concerned than ever with being fresh in his poetic conception. In this same poem, he wrote memorably “second-thought is prose.”

*Frank Lloyd Wright*. See Frank Lloyd Wright, *An Organic Architecture: The Architecture of Democracy* (London: Lund, Humphries, 1939), 11; Richard A. Etlin, *Frank Lloyd Wright and Le Corbusier: The Romantic Legacy* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1994), 6.

*other fashions that had played out*. Ralph Adams Cram, *The Ministry of Art* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1914), 45: “What is the meaning of the return to Gothic, not only in form, but ‘in spirit and in truth’? Is it that we are pleased with its forms and wearied of others? Not at all. It is simply this, that the Renaissance-Reformation-Revolution having run its course, and its epoch having reached its appointed term, we go back, deliberately, or instinctively, —back, as life goes back, as history goes back, to restore something of the antecedent epoch, to win again something we had lost, to return to the fork in the roads, to gain again the old lamps we credulously bartered for new.”

*matriculation*. The term, from the Late Latin *matricula*, refers to the insertion of names into a register.

*A true school of architecture*. Cram, *Gothic Quest*, 342–43. On his conversion experience, see Lears, *No Place of Grace*, 204.

*away from a Teutonic model of higher education*. For the best overview, see Turner, *Campus*, 215–47.

*College Hall*. Designed by the architect Thomas Webb Richards. In the City of Brotherly Love, Victorian Gothic is distinguished by the colorful palette of local stone used as building material, especially green serpentine accentuated by gray schist, pink granite, and yellow and purple sandstone, with a roof of blue and red slate. Since the serpentine did not weather well in an urban environment, the hall lost its towers early.

*Long Walk*. The designer, English architect William Burges, wanted them to form a quadrangle, but instead they were constructed in a continuous line.

*Carpenter Gothic*. Cram's "Carpenter's Gothic" is now known either as Carpenter Gothic or less often as Carpenters Gothic. Cram, *My Life in Architecture*, 30: "The sheer savagery of those boxlike wooden structures, with their toothpick pinnacles, their adventitious buttresses of seven-eighths-inch board, find no rival in all history."

*uniquely American idiom*. Canada had wooden Gothic churches of an impressive but different sort. See Douglas Scott Richardson, "Hyperborean Gothic; or, Wilderness Ecclesiology and the Wood Churches of Edward Medley," *Architectura* 2 (1972): 48–74.

*unmercifully bruising*. Cram, *My Life in Architecture*, 30: "the so-called 'Victorian Gothic' that was measurably imposed by the teachings of John Ruskin, and that resulted in strange forms and modes imported from North Italy, and somewhat mishandled in transit."

*Hudson River School*. On the school and the architecture, see Pierson, *American Buildings and Their Architects*, 18–19, 280–81.

*Lyndhurst*. See Pierson, *American Buildings and Their Architects*, 308–48.

*turreted villa*. Originally called "Knoll." The sprawling house, with its whimsical anachronism and asymmetry, stood apart from much architecture prevailing at the time.

*conditioned by his literary readings*. Kerry Dean Carso, "Diagnosing the 'Sir Walter Disease': American Architecture in the Age of Romantic Literature," *Mosaic: A Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature* (Winnipeg) 35.4 (2002): 121–42.

*The library*. Demolished in 1961.

*castellated architecture*. At the same time the building was not restricted exclusively to the elements of a make-believe castle, but also featured tracery and finials. See Rod Miller, *West Point U.S. Military Academy, An Architectural Tour* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2002), 6–8.

*alienating those who had grown inured to it*. Cram, *My Life in Architecture*, 102: "The existing buildings were mostly of that type of pseudo-military Gothic that afflicted the country in the mid-nineteenth century, and these had created a tradition that most of the military and civilian authorities held in high honour."

*militaristic Gothic campus*. Miller, *West Point U.S. Military Academy*, 32.

*first attestation*. OED, s.v.

*Since 1840*. Obviously, this date falls far beyond the martial activities of the Revolutionary War and War of 1812, but both the "Big Cannon" and its smaller sibling "Little Cannon" are tied to both those wars. It would be interesting to sort out whether

the militia that played a role in their movement to the grounds of the college ever used the campus for marching exercises.

### Americanized Middle Ages

*an emblem of an artificial neo-romanticism.* Norman F. Cantor, *Inventing the Middle Ages: The Lives, Works, and Ideas of the Great Medievalists of the Twentieth Century* (New York: William Morrow, 1991), 44.

*a musician named Aileen Tone.* This young woman has been described variously as his honorary niece (or “niece-in-wish”), personal secretary, and paid companion.

*avant-gardist.* Levarie, “Henry Adams.”

*describing their musicological undertaking.* Letter to Elizabeth Cameron, December 17, 1912, in *LHA*, 6: 573–74: “With Miss Tone, I am full, and very gay. We are frantically deep in our 13th century poetry and music. Miss Tone never was so worked, and we are going to Paris to get her a jongleur costume, to sing Nicolette. She is as deep in it as I, and I, vastly to my surprise, find myself a leader of a popular movement, with my Chartres for Evangel, and Ralph Adams Cram for St. John Baptist. They will beatify me after all.” The Nicolette that Miss Tone sings is the character from *Aucassin et Nicolette*, an Old French text with which *Our Lady’s Tumbler* has been associated (and printed). Both texts are translated in Mason, *Aucassin and Nicolette*. The Copeland & Day printing of *Our Lady’s Tumbler* was modeled in its format on their *Aucassin and Nicolette*: see Kraus, *Messrs. Copeland and Day*, 40, 49.

*not a professional medieval historian.* For the most succinct introduction to Henry Adams in the context of medieval studies, see Karl F. Morrison, “Henry Adams (1838–1918),” in *Medieval Scholarship: Biographical Studies on the Formation of a Discipline*, ed. Helen Damico and Joseph B. Zavadil, 3 vols. (New York: Garland, 1995–2000), 1: 115–30.

*denying it to be a book at all.* Letter to Elizabeth Cameron, May 13, 1905, in *LHA*, 5: 659–62, at 659–60: “I deny that it is a book; it is only a running chatter with my nieces and those of us who care for old art.”

*he did not have that objective.* He could not have displayed greater candor when he professed that his goal was “not technical knowledge; not accurate information; not correct views either on history, art, or religion.” See Adams, *MSMC*, 397 (chap. 4, “Normandy and the Ile de France”).

*the most foreign of worlds to the American soul.* See Courtenay, “Virgin and the Dynamo,” 10: “It was, as Henry Adams observed, the most foreign of worlds to the American soul.” The formulation has been quoted twice as the words of Adams himself, but with citation only of Courtenay’s essay. See Paul Freedman and Gabrielle M. Spiegel, “Medievalisms Old and New: The Rediscovery of Alterity in North American

Medieval Studies," *The American Historical Review* 103 (1998): 677–704, at 681; Gabrielle M. Spiegel, "In the Mirror's Eye: The Writing of Medieval History in North America," in *Imagined Histories: American Historians Interpret the Past*, ed. Anthony Molho and Gordon S. Wood (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 238–62, at 241.

*bestseller in its own time*. In fact, its advance sales broke records at Houghton Mifflin, which issued the 1913 trade edition—with an introduction by Ralph Adams Cram—published by the American Institute of Architects.

*the bitterest proof of its failure*. Chandler, *Dream of Order*, 233–34. The passage continues: "For Adams's book once again tells us that the creative society can only be based on faith; but it shows that even in the Middle Ages, such faith could not exist."



## Notes to Chapter 5

### American Gothic Colleges: Ogive Talking

*Not only are universities a "cathedral."* *The Complete Guide to Asperger's Syndrome* (London: Jessica Kingsley, 2006), 301.

*in the context of the architecture.* Paris, *Mediaeval French Literature*, 55: "[Its] literary art is more conscious of its aim and its effects, is lighter, more delicate, more learned, but much less spontaneous, less powerful, and less simple; it is Gothic architecture, with its elegance, its slenderness, and its rich ornamentation, succeeding the grave and somewhat ponderous Romanesque."

*spiritual underpinning.* The spirituality presumed to underlie a tour of duty in the military helps to explain why a chapel bulked large in the promotion of the new constructions at West Point (see Fig. n.13).



Fig. n.13 Postcard depicting West Point Chapel, West Point, NY  
(Detroit, MI: Detroit Publishing Co., early twentieth century).

*the uncertain relevance of such features to America.* Henry Seidel Canby, *Alma Mater: The Gothic Age of the American College* (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1936), 79, 232–33. In an extended passage, he gave his readers much to unpack. Even after casting aspersions upon the architecture, he still could not refrain from conceding in the parenthesis that the architecture, especially in its spires, had the capacity to achieve beauty. Likewise, he granted, for the record, how rapturously most faculty and students greeted it.

*his classmates and he bonded.* Canby, *Alma Mater*, 52, 77, 76: “Our society was like the nonprofit-making orders of the Middle Ages.”

*a walled city against materialism.* Ralph Adams Cram, “Princeton Architecture,” *The American Architect*, July 21, 1909: 21–30, at 24.

*medievaesque academic garb.* Often in sweltering heat and humidity, faculty and graduating students drape themselves in gowns, in the beginning of thick wool but more recently ever more commonly of utterly unmedieval synthetics such as polyester. The victims of these occasions, human sacrifices to stickiness and steaminess, put on mortarboards. This headgear perches atop their perspiring pates at best precariously, even with the help of bobby pins that did not exist in the Middle Ages. Ironically, the graduates who donned these items originally belonged to institutions where building design was willfully mortar- and grout-free.

*sartorial standards.* The commitment to such regalia was affirmed and regulated by the creation of the Intercollegiate Code of Academic Costume in 1895. Natalia Maree Belting, *The History of Caps and Gowns* (New York: Collegiate Cap & Gown Co., 1956); David T. Boven, “American Universities’ Departure from the Academic Costume Code,” *Transactions of the Burgon Society* 9 (2009): 156–74; Stephen L. Wolgast, “The Intercollegiate Code of Academic Costume: An Introduction,” *Transactions of the Burgon Society* 9 (2009): 9–37. For a then-contemporary discussion, see “Gowns for College Men; Academic Costumes in American Universities: Plan to Secure a Uniform Practice in the Use of the Caps and Gowns in This Country So That the Degree of the Wearer, the Faculty Under Whom It Was Obtained, and the Institution Conferring It May Be Readily Seen,” *New York Times*, Sunday, April 26, 1896, 25.

*the choice of architectural styles.* A. D. F. Hamlin, “The Educational Influence of Collegiate Architecture,” *The Architectural Forum* 43.6 (1925): 321–26: “The result of all these changes in the college life, curriculum and activities has been to produce an architectural environment which can only be compared to that of the great mediaeval monasteries of France and Italy, like Monte Cassino and Clairvaux.”

*Clairvaux as that of the Cistercians.* He lighted upon the French monastery without premeditation, not driven by any apparent knowledge of our tale. His resolve to throw into relief both the mission and the construction style favored by medieval Cistercians (particularly those of Clairvaux) helps to explain why the faculty and students of American colleges in this period demonstrated such receptivity to the stories of *Our Lady’s Tumbler* and the *Le jongleur de Notre Dame*.

*round-arch.* Designated in German as *Rundbogenstil*.

*later accretions.* The mid-nineteenth-century gargoyles of Notre-Dame in Paris would be the most famous case. Everyone knew that the Cologne cathedral had been completed

in the nineteenth century, but how many could identify exactly which elements were modern, and which medieval? The same holds for the Ulm Minster, construction of which began in the Gothic era but was not completed until the late nineteenth century (see Figs. n.14 and n.15). It boasts the tallest steeple in the world, now aged all of 125 years, barely older than Cram's contributions to the architecture of West Point.

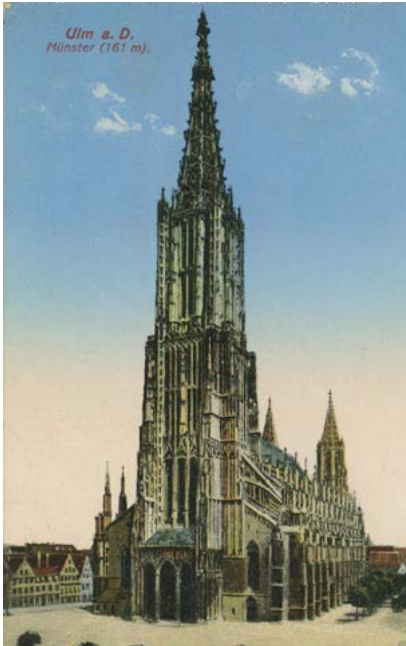


Fig. n.14 Postcard depicting the Ulm Minster, Ulm, Germany (Munich: Ottmar Zieber, ca. 1915).



Fig. n.15 The Ulm Minster, Ulm, Germany. Engraving by P. Ahrens after W. Mayer, 1854. Trieste, Italy, Österreichischer Lloyd.

*Romanesque revival.* The Romanesque revival is sometimes referred to alternatively as the “Norman style” or “Lombard style,” particularly in works published during the nineteenth century. These alternative names refer to variations of historic Romanesque that were developed by the Normans and Lombards, respectively. Thus, the University of California at Los Angeles is dominated by magnificent edifices in Lombard Romanesque revival, such as Royce Hall, the Chemistry Building (see Fig. n.16), or, facing them, the library with its splendidly vaulted reading room (see Figs. n.17 and n.18).



Fig. n.16 Postcard depicting Royce Hall, University of California at Los Angeles, CA (Los Angeles: Western Publishing and Novelty Co., date unknown).



Fig. n.17 Postcard depicting the Library of the University of California at Los Angeles, CA (New York: The Albertype Company, early twentieth century).



Fig. n.18 Postcard depicting the main reading room of the Library of the University of California at Los Angeles, CA (New York: The Albertype Company, early twentieth century).



*more than merely the vertebrae*. He contributed Holder Hall and the university dining halls (see Fig. n.19), Graduate College, University Chapel, and other buildings.

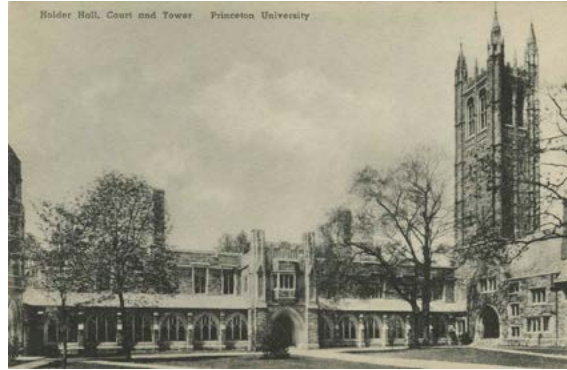


Fig. n.19 Postcard depicting Holder Hall, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ (Princeton, NJ: H. M. Hinkson, early twentieth century).

*Blair Hall*. By the Philadelphia architecture firm of Cope and Sewardson (1885–1912).

*the spur*. This branch line is served by a shuttle train known as the Dinky. The original station was located south of Blair Hall. Its successor, erected further southward in 1917–1918, now serves other purposes. Today's terminus sits even closer to the Mason-Dixon line.

*screen the iron technology of the real world*. Glenn Patton, "American Collegiate Gothic: A Phase of University Architectural Development," *Journal of Higher Education* 38.1 (1967): 1–8, at 5.

*medieval fantasyland*. On a rise above them loomed to one side the collegiate Gothic of Blair Hall and to the other the High Victorian Gothic of Witherspoon Hall (see Fig. n.20).



Fig. n.20 Postcard depicting the train station, Blair Hall, and Witherspoon Hall, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ (Princeton, NJ: E. J. Van Marter, early twentieth century).



*presumption of community*. The noun *university* has traditionally referred to the whole caucus of teachers and students who pursue studies in higher branches of learning in a specific place. The word is formed from the Latin adjective *universus*, whence the modern English *universe*, meaning literally “turned into one.”

*Oxford and Cambridge*. There, the medieval Gothic had been supplemented in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by buildings in different reprises of Gothic revival.

*the monastic quadrangle and collegiate ideals*. Turner, *Campus*, 215–47 (chapter title).

*Anglo-Saxon ethnic background*. In a similar vein, John A. Corbin, who was Harvard-educated, wrote in *An American at Oxford* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1902), <https://archive.org/details/anamericanatof02corbgoog>, vi–vii: “if the American educational ideals in the end approximate the English more closely than they do at present, such a result would be merely incidental to the fact that the two countries have at bottom much the same social character and instincts.”

*hard work and willpower*. See Johanna G. Seasonwein, *Princeton and the Gothic Revival, 1870–1930* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Art Museum, 2012), 22–23.

*residential buildings*. Such as Patton Hall, built in 1906 by the architect Benjamin W. Morris Jr. (see Fig. n.21).



Fig. n.21 Postcard depicting Patton Hall, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ (Philadelphia: Ruth Murray Miller, early twentieth century).

*assorted other styles*. The showiest, which is not to say beloved or successful, is Alexander Hall (see Fig. n.22). Dedicated in 1894, the lecture hall was modeled after the Palais du Trocadéro, which had been constructed for the Paris Exposition of 1878 (see Fig. n.23).

This space thus offers yet another symptom of the suggestive role played by world's fairs in disseminating nineteenth-century views of the Middle Ages. At the same time, the medievalism of the hall is American to the utmost. Despite not having been designed by Richardson himself but by William A. Potter, Alexander Hall betrays all the symptoms of Richardsonian Romanesque.



Fig. n.22 Postcard depicting Alexander Hall, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ (Princeton, NJ: E. J. Van Marter, ca. 1907).



Fig. n.23 Postcard depicting the Palais du Trocadéro, Paris Exposition of 1878 (late nineteenth century).

*Cleveland Tower and the chapel.* The first, in the Graduate College, was completed in 1913 as a memorial to former US commander-in-chief Grover Cleveland. The second, on the main campus, was built between 1924 and 1928. Other collegiate Gothic buildings are the University Press building, erected in 1910–1911—its entranceway has two parapets with blind battlements (see Fig. n.24)—and the indoor athletic facility (see Fig. n.25), which was replaced in 1947 by Dillon Gymnasium, likewise in this style. A hallmark building from near the end of the campaign is Firestone Library, completed at enormous expense in 1948.



Fig. n.24 Gate of the Princeton University Press. Photograph by Wikimedia user Djkeddie, 2015, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Princeton\\_University\\_Press.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Princeton_University_Press.jpg)



Fig. n.25 Postcard depicting Princeton University Gymnasium, Princeton, NJ (early twentieth century).

*architecture and literature in the style.* Small wonder that in the third quarter of the twentieth century, Princeton's Department of English, located only a few steps away, was home to the so-called Robertsonian or neo-Augustinian school of interpretation, which emphasized the allegorical interpretation of medieval literature.

*refrain to one of the two beloved reunion songs.* When the lyrics were composed in 1910, Princeton was already looking architecturally much more elderly than strictly calendrical accuracy would allow. From those less enamored of revivalism, it has come in for a barrage of blistering deprecation for featuring "a modern plan encased in a late medieval frosting" and for being a "Gothic mask." W. Barksdale Maynard, *Princeton: America's Campus* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012), 163. Maynard's book is by far the single most useful title on the architecture of Princeton University.

*Woodrow Wilson.* Between the two presidencies he served as Governor of New Jersey from 1911 to 1913.

*an oration Wilson delivered in 1896.* The occasion was the sesquicentennial celebration of the university's foundation in 1746.

*his own home.* The Wilson House, designed in 1895 by the New York architect Edward S. Child, stands at 82 Library Place in what was formerly the municipality of Princeton Borough. The architectural style was then often called Elizabethan Gothic.

*a knight living in a feudal castle.* Dean Mathey, *Men and Gothic Towers* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1967), 58.

*an alumnus.* The individual in question was Herbert Edward Mierow (Princeton class of 1914).

*the masons who toiled for years.* The carvers appreciated the commitment to their trade shown by the architects. Sometimes they returned the favor by immortalizing them in their output. To take Cram as a case of what is sometimes truly arch humor, a bespectacled grotesque (or crocket) of him is found on the right side of the central portal at the western end of the resplendent collegiate Gothic chapel at Princeton University (see Fig. n.26). The identity of this grotesque was revealed by a mason named Clifford MacKinnon in 1991, when he was 96 years of age. He also made known that the corresponding crocket was a self-portrait. Raymond Rhinehart, *Princeton University: The Campus Guide, an Architectural Tour* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2000), 50. A kindred sculpture of Cram's head with goggle-like glasses projects drolly within a corbel supporting a balcony on Brunet Hall at the University of Richmond (see Fig. n.27), one of the many campuses Cram was enlisted to design and decorate, from 1910. See Reuben E. Alley, *History of the University of Richmond* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1977), 27–64.



Fig. n.26 A bespectacled grotesque of Ralph Adams Cram on the Princeton University Chapel.  
 Photograph by Anna Bonnell-Freidin, 2013. Image courtesy of Anna Bonnell-Freidin.  
 All rights reserved.





Fig. n.27 Another bespectacled grotesque of Ralph Adams Cram on Brunet Hall, University of Richmond. Photograph by Doug Satteson, 1992. © Doug Satteson, image courtesy of the University of Richmond Museums.

*Americanization.* Clark, "Ralph Adams Cram."

*commitment to the humanities.* Ralph Adams Cram, "Recent University Architecture in the United States," *Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects*, 3rd ser., 19.14, May 25, 1912: 497–518. More recently, see Goodchild, "Oxbridge's Tudor Gothic Influences."

*founded in 1636.* In recognition of its newness and apartness, the site was known in the beginning as Newtown.

*because of its long remove.* Blake Gumprecht, *The American College Town* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2008), 18–19.

*Quadrangled enclaves.* Jill Grant, "Open Society or Cloistered Enclaves? Urban Form in the Information Age," *Plan Canada* 44.2 (2004): 42–44.

*Cloistered snobs.* See William Birch, "Cloistered against the Real World," *The Times Higher Educational Supplement* 2, February 2, 1990; John Wakeford, *The Cloistered Élite: A Sociological Analysis of the English Public Boarding School* (New York: Praeger, 1969).

*the Gothic of our imitation monastery.* Canby, *Alma Mater*, 77.

*traditions (not all of them decorous) of monasticism.* Canby, *Alma Mater*, xii.

*value of the unworldliness.* Canby, *Alma Mater*, 53: "The Gothic walls seemed to shut off our college competitions from the cruder world outside us, and fostered the illusion of an American Utopia."



*draws a parallel.* Canby, *Alma Mater*, 220–21: “Monasteries at the end of the age of faith must also have had their complexes. Many a young lay brother must have been stirred to wonder, contempt, or a puzzled admiration, at the sight of Anselm at work upon his hundredth copy of a Book of Hours. Some such collision between a new era and a new barbarism with the peaceful world of literary scholarship was responsible for the strains and stresses, the eccentricities, and the futile attempts to exalt the letter at the expense of the spirit, which were so characteristic of scholarship at our college.”

*indecisive over their roles.* Canby, *Alma Mater*, 213: “He had lost the simple confidence of the monk in the efficacy of his beads and masses, without acquiring the hearty assurance of the layman.”

*arrogant unrespectability.* Canby, *Alma Mater*, 31–32.

### F. Scott Fitzgerald and the Gothic Jazz Age

*all built yesterday.* F. Scott Fitzgerald, “Princeton,” in idem, *My Lost City: Personal Essays, 1920–1940*, ed. James L. W. West III (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 6–15, at 7: “Two tall spires and then suddenly all around you spreads out the loveliest riot of Gothic architecture in America, battlement linked on to battlement, hall to hall; arch-broken, vine-covered—luxuriant and lovely over two square miles of green grass. Here is no monotony, no feeling that it was all built yesterday at the whim of last week’s millionaire...”

*Spires and Gargoyles.* The pairing of nouns sounds like a possible echo or deliberate distortion of Henry Adams’s title “Towers and Portals” for the fifth chapter in his *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres*. Citations of *This Side of Paradise* will follow F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Novels and Stories 1920–1922* (New York: Library of America, 2000), 1–248 (book 1, chap. 2, “Spires and Gargoyles,” 35–81). Fitzgerald earlier wrote “The Spire and the Gargoyle,” *Nassau Literary Magazine* 72.7 (February 1917): 297–307, reprinted in idem, *Spires and Gargoyles: Early Writings, 1909–1919*, ed. James L. W. West III, *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of F. Scott Fitzgerald* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 161–69.

*the impact of the college.* *This Side of Paradise*, 50 (book 1, chap. 2, “Spires and Gargoyles”): “The cool bathed his eyes and slowed the flight of time—time that had crept so insidiously through the lazy April afternoons, seemed so intangible in the long spring twilights. Evening after evening the senior singing had drifted over the campus in melancholy beauty, and through the shell of his undergraduate consciousness had broken a deep and reverent devotion to the gray walls and Gothic peaks and all they symbolized as warehouses of dead ages.

The tower that in view of his window sprang upward, grew into a spire, yearning higher until its uppermost tip was half invisible against the morning skies, gave him

the first sense of the transiency and unimportance of the campus figures except as holders of the apostolic succession. He liked knowing that Gothic architecture, with its upward trend, was peculiarly appropriate to universities, and the idea became personal to him. The silent stretches of green, the quiet halls with an occasional late-burning scholastic light held his imagination in a strong grasp, and the chastity of the spire became a symbol of this perception."

*mediaevalist*. *This Side of Paradise*, 95 (book 1, chap. 3, "The Egotist Considers"). Fitzgerald gives three different definitions for this mode of being. First, "It's the passion for classifying and finding a type." Second, "It's a desire to get something definite." Finally, "It's the nucleus of scholastic philosophy."

*his adulation of thirteenth-century cathedrals*. *This Side of Paradise*, 112 (book 1, chap. 4, "Narcissus Off Duty").

*the Honorable Thornton Hancock*. *This Side of Paradise*, 25 (book 1, chap. 1, "Amory, Son of Beatrice").

*in a letter*. In the postscript, the writer claimed that one of the nonessential parts in his fiction was a person based on "Henry Adams—I didn't do him thoroughly, of course—but I knew him when I was a boy." *The Letters of F. Scott Fitzgerald*, ed. Andrew Turnbull (New York: Scribner, 1963), 138. On Fitzgerald's personal acquaintance with Adams and literary use of his writings, see David McKay Powell, "Henry Adams's Gothic Disposition in Fitzgerald's *This Side of Paradise*," *The F. Scott Fitzgerald Review* 10.1 (2012): 93–107.

*he met the real-life Adams*. We have Adams's viewpoint on the meeting, which took place through Cyril Sigourney Webster Fay, an Episcopalian minister who converted to Roman Catholicism in 1908 and became a priest in 1910. Fay was a trustee of the Newman School, a Catholic preparatory school on the corner of Essex Street and Polifly Road in Hackensack, New Jersey, which Fitzgerald attended as a boarder from 1911 to 1913. In November of 1912, the future writer became acquainted with Fay (see Fig. n.28).

Fay's death in the influenza epidemic of 1919 shook Fitzgerald profoundly as he was composing his first novel. The man of the cloth appeared in *This Side of Paradise* as the dramatis persona Monsignor Thayer Darcy. In addition, he was the dedicatee of the book. Finally, his letters to the novelist were quarried by the writer when he composed the story. See Maggie Gordon Froehlich, "Passionate Discretion: Fitzgerald in the Unpublished Correspondence of Sigourney Fay, Shane Leslie, and William Hemmick," *The F. Scott Fitzgerald Review* 10.1 (2012): 2–26; Thomas A. Tweed, *America's Church: The National Shrine and Catholic Presence in the Nation's Capital* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 130, 324–25.

The priest was introduced to Henry Adams at Christmas of 1914 by Aileen Tone, who worked with Adams on medieval music in his later years. Adams's attitudes

toward Fay, as the latter participated in his musical explorations and attempted to win him over to the Catholic religion, may be traced in letters he penned over slightly more than three years between then and his death in March of 1918. See Susan Hanssen, "'Shall We Go to Rome?': The Last Days of Henry Adams," *New England Quarterly* 86 (2013): 5–28, at 10–11, 17, 24–28.



Fig. n.28 Postcard depicting Newman School, Hackensack, NJ  
(New York: Curzon-Robey, early twentieth century).

*viewed through the prism.* Book 2 of the novel bears the subtitle "The Education of a Personage," also a likely allusion to Adams's autobiography. Fitzgerald, *This Side of Paradise*, 145–248.

*respected by half the intellectual world.* Fitzgerald, *This Side of Paradise*, 231 (book 2, chap. 5, "The Egotist Becomes a Personage").

*some ghastly Italian sonnets.* Citations of *The Beautiful and Damned* will follow Fitzgerald, *Novels and Stories*, 435–795; here, at 443 (book 1, chap. 1, "Anthony Patch").

*Why you should write about the Middle Ages.* Fitzgerald, *The Beautiful and Damned*, 449 (book 1, chap. 1, "Anthony Patch").

### Late Collegiate Gothic at Duke and Rhodes

*by the beauty and by the medievalness.* "Duke University Architecture Discussed by President W. P. Few," *The Alumni Register* (Duke University, June 1931): 195–97.

*the West Campus.* The Gothic on the West contrasted with the Romanesque revival or Victorian Gothic characteristic of some earlier buildings, now largely disappeared, on the East.

*sudden epiphany.* The "whole city of grey stone" emerges out of the evergreen scrublands of the Tar Heel state dominated by "by far the largest Gothic building

one has ever seen—larger than the Houses of Parliament [see Fig. n.29], larger than St Pancras Station [see Fig. n.30], far larger, certainly, than any church or abbey or castle set up by the original inventors of the style.” Aldous Huxley, “Notes on the Way,” *Time and Tide*, July 3, 1937: 889–91; repr. as “Notes on the Way, 3 July 1937,” ed. James Sexton, *Aldous Huxley Annual* 4 (2004): 26–31, with this quotation at p. 27.



Fig. n.29 Postcard depicting the Houses of Parliament, London (early twentieth century).



Fig. n.30 Postcard depicting St. Pancras Station, London (London: Frederick Hartmann, ca. 1902–1909).

*What a mania these Americans have.* Giuseppe Prezzolini, *Diario*, 2nd ed., 3 vols. (Milan: Rusconi, 1978–1999), 1: 446: “Son tornato ieri mattina da Durham (dove andai il 28)

dopo aver visto sorgere da una foresta un'università nuova, fatta sul modello di Oxford, con le finestre gotiche chiuse da vetri a cul di bottiglia. Che mania per l'antico falso hanno questi Americani!" Both Huxley and Prezzolini might have been more surprised had they known that a (or even the) major contributor to the design for most of this Gothic city was an African-American named Julian F. Abele, chief design architect for the Philadelphia firm of Horace Trumbauer (see Fig. n.31). On Abele's role in Duke's collegiate Gothic and on its discovery, see William E. King, *Julian Abele and the Design of Duke University: An Extended Essay* (Durham, NC: Duke University Store, 2017).



Fig. n.31 Julian Abele. Photograph, date and photographer unknown.  
Durham, NC, Duke University Archives, Photograph Collection.

*Rhodes College*. It operated then under the name of Southwestern Presbyterian University. Subsequently it became known also as Southwestern College of the Mississippi Valley, as Southwestern at Memphis, and simply as Southwestern. In 1984, the college in Tennessee transformed itself into Rhodes College.

*In 1925*. Around this time, Princeton University ceased being a Presbyterian establishment and became, first, interdenominational, then nonsectarian.

*genuineness and beauty*. Charles E. Diehl, "The Ideals of Southwestern," *Southwestern Bulletin* n.s. 13, 1 (December 1925): 5–15, at 10–11, partially quoted by William Morgan, *Collegiate Gothic: The Architecture of Rhodes College* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1989), 5, announced that the leaders of the college had "decided to build along collegiate Gothic lines because of the infinite variety and charm of that type of architecture... There is in this country much pseudo-Gothic architecture, a cheap imitation which may content the ignorant or untrained, but which calls for the contemptuous ire of the enlightened critic. This we proposed to avoid. Genuineness is characteristic of the heart of this institution, and we wanted this note sounded



everywhere, even in the construction of the physical plant. It was to be enduring, for we were building for generations to come. It was to be beautiful, for the aesthetic side of man's nature is important and a college of liberal culture dare not overlook it. It was to be genuine throughout, free from all substitutions and cheap, make-believe effects, for this college has a hatred for sham. It is a source of satisfaction to know that our architectural ideal has been realized..."

*The architect.* Charles Zeller Klauder, under Frank Miles Day.

## Cathedrals of Learning

*knowledge was acquired and arranged in large buildings.* The medievalist Etienne Gilson reportedly referred to the systematic works of medieval scholastic theology as "cathedrals of the mind."

*The Cathedral of Learning.* Designed by the architect Charles Klauder. Like many a towering church of the Middle Ages and later, this edifice was built thanks to the nickel-and-dime contributions of numberless common people. In the search for financial support in 1925, approximately 115,000 individuals donated at least small change toward the costs of construction. Turner, *Campus*, 238. For the most recent study of it in English, see Anke Koeth, "Gothic with an American Accent: The Cathedral of Learning," in Murphy and Reilly, *Skyscraper Gothic*, 157–82.

*an ivory tower upheld by a metallic skeleton.* Thus, Anke Köth, "Elfenbeintürme mit Stahlskelett: Amerikanische Wolkenkratzeruniversitäten," in *Architektur für Forschung und Lehre: Universität als Bauaufgabe. Beiträge zur Tagung des Kunsthistorischen Instituts der Christian-Albrechts-Universität zu Kiel am 5. bis 7. Juni 2009*, ed. Klaus Gereon Beuckers, Kieler kunsthistorische Schriften N. F., vol. 11 (Kiel, Germany: Ludwig, 2010), 147–74.

*Anglicanism.* Lears, *No Place of Grace*, 203–4.

*public universities.* For example, City College of New York committed to Gothic early in its history. From 1849 to 1907, it occupied the Free Academy Building in downtown Manhattan, a Gothic revival structure designed by James Renwick Jr. that was demolished in 1928. In 1907, the institution moved to a George Browne Post-designed collegiate Gothic campus in Manhattanville, upper Manhattan (see Figs. n.32, n.33 and n.34). Not to be confused with City College is the University of the City of New York, which in time would become New York University (see Fig. n.35). Its University Building, designed by the architectural firm of Ithiel Town, Alexander Jackson Davis, and James Dakin, was built in 1833–1836 but razed in 1894–1895. Davis had the decisive hand in the design of the chapel inside the building. Samuel F. B. Morse, artist (and inventor of the eponymous code), painted an *Allegorical Landscape Showing New York University* that depicted the building, recognizable but in a very fanciful location.

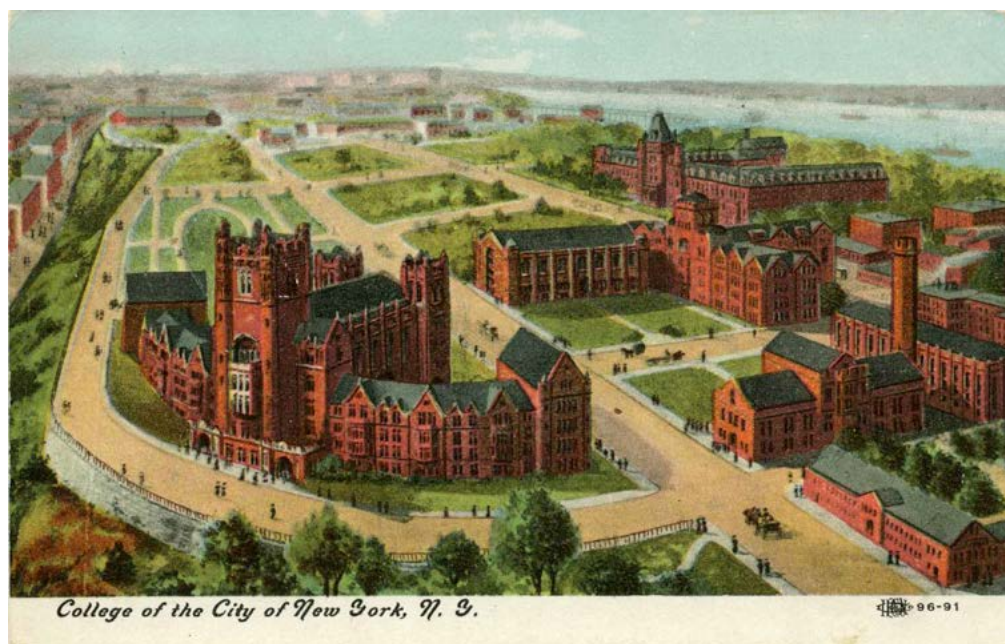


Fig. n.32 Postcard depicting an overhead view of the the College of the City of New York, NY  
(New York: Illustrated Post Card Co., ca. 1908).



Fig. n.33 Postcard depicting the College of the City of New York, NY  
(early twentieth century).





Fig. n.34 Postcard depicting the College of the City of New York, NY  
(Detroit, MI: Detroit Publishing Co., early twentieth century).



Fig. n.35 University Building, City University of New York, NY.  
Photograph, ca. 1867. Photographer unknown.

*completed in 1933.* By the architects Edward York and Philip Sawyer, both of whom began their careers with the renowned firm of McKim, Mead, and White. See Kathryn Horste, *The Michigan Law Quadrangle: Architecture and Origins* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997).

*funded by an alumnus.* William Wilson Cook, who earned his fortune and worked in New York.

*Northwest Territory.* The full name was the Territory Northwest of the River Ohio.

*High Victorian Gothic.* Designed by Gurdon P. Randall: see Jay Pridmore, *Northwestern University: An Architectural Tour* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2009), 11–12, 18–20. The Evanston campus features various substantially later constructions in collegiate Gothic. Dedicated in 1933, the Charles Deering Library was the inspiration of James Gamble Rogers, a graduate of Yale University (see Fig. n.36). In writing of his intentions in Illinois, the architect referred very openly to his desire “to make a distinctive style of elastic Gothic architecture that will be ‘Northwestern Gothic.’” James Gamble Rogers to William A. Dyche, October 9, 1930, Minutes of the Board of Trustees, October 28, 1930, Northwestern University Archives, quoted by Betsky, *James Gamble Rogers*, 57. His architectural palette was expansive, with Gothic being only one among many traditional colors among which he alternated with a quietly impressive eclecticism. Also conceived by him at the same university was the much less labyrinthine Lutkin Memorial Hall, completed in 1941 (see Fig. n.37), the South Quadrangle, Scott Hall, and the stadium on the Evanston campus. Aaron Betsky, *James Gamble Rogers and the Architecture of Pragmatism* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994).



Fig. n.36 Postcard depicting Charles Deering Library, Northwestern University, Evanston, IL (Chicago: C. R. Childs, ca. 1907–1915).

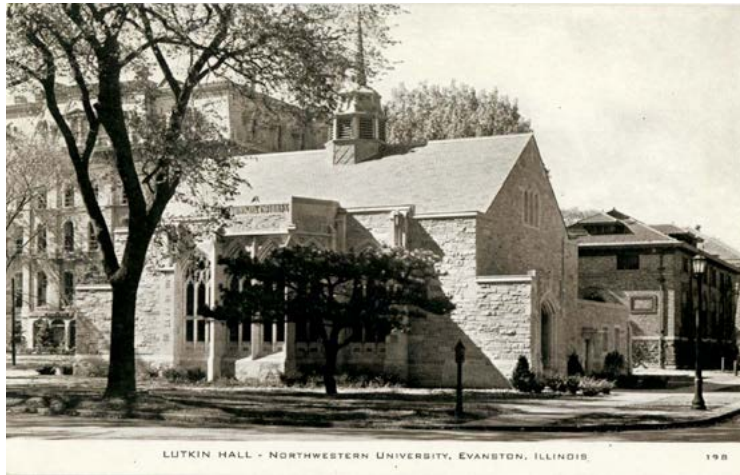


Fig. n.37 Postcard depicting Lutkin Hall, Northwestern University, Evanston, IL (Chicago: C. R. Childs, ca. 1907–1915).

*constructed around 1925.* By the architectural firm Holabird and Roche.

*announced.* In the *Annual Catalogue and Circular*.

*deepest and sincerest studies.* *Garrett Biblical Institute Bulletin* 5.3 (March 1917), second unnumbered page of text.

*an investment for all time.* Pridmore, *Northwestern University*, 156.

*his first major institutional and Gothic design.* Betsky, *James Gamble Rogers*, 40–46.

*not quite skyscrapers.* The largest of these is the Montgomery Ward Memorial Building, completed by Rogers in 1926. It was intended to be “enduring” as well as “useful to humanity.” Pridmore, *Northwestern University*, 156. Like diamonds, which are sold as being “forever,” Gothic in the early twentieth century was marketed to alumni with substantial financial resources as being equally long-lasting. (In the rock-paper-scissors of fundraising, good rock always wins.) The twenty stories of this high-rise have arches and buttresses around the base as well as at the top of the tower, but the structure can hardly be mistaken for a close replica of English Perpendicular style. On the contrary, it looks more than a little like Rogers’s entry in the Chicago Tribune competition. His rejected submission had been “a Gothicized skyscraper,” since that had been a strong trend in the 1922 contest. Pridmore, *Northwestern University*, 156–57.

*won a famous victory.* West triumphed to a great extent courtesy of his Midas touch in coaxing funding from deep-pocketed donors.

*college of memory.* Patrick L. Pinnell, *Yale University: An Architectural Tour*, 2nd ed. (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2013), 74, 77.



*managed landscape*. *The Proposed Graduate College of Princeton* (Princeton, NJ: Printed for the University, 1903), 15: "Whatever may be true of other subjects, liberal studies at least find their greatest charm amid old associations and their natural home in the peace of rural life. Quadrangles enclosing sunny lawns, towers and gateways opening into quiet retreats, ivy-grown walls looking on sheltered gardens, vistas through avenues of arching elms, walks that wind amid the groves of Academe,—these are the places where the affections linger and where memories cling like the ivies themselves, and these are the answers in architecture and scenic setting to the immemorial longings of academic generations back to the time when universities first began to build their homes. Nothing so deeply appeals to our students to-day as this type of architecture,—the exquisite collegiate Gothic, found at its best in the remaining examples of Oxford and Cambridge. Nothing so fully accords in spirit with our desires for Princeton." West used very similar language a decade later in *The Graduate College at Princeton, with Some Reflections on the Humanizing of Learning* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1913).

*gardens of the mind*. "The Spirit of Learning," delivered before the Harvard Chapter of Phi Beta Kappa on July 1, 1909, *Harvard Graduate's Magazine* (September 1909): 1–17. The full context bears quoting: "[College] should give them insight into the things of the mind and of the spirit, a sense of having lived and formed their friendships amidst the gardens of the mind where grows the tree of knowledge of good and evil, a consciousness of having taken on them the vows of true enlightenment and of having undergone the discipline, never to be shaken off, of those who seek wisdom in candor, with faithful labor and travail of spirit."

## Gothic Landscaping: Picturesque Perfect

*picturesqueness had been invoked*. Germann, *Gothic Revival*, 59.

*natural growth and the quaint*. Pierson, *American Buildings and Their Architects*, 270.

*As picturesqueness denotes power*. *The Architecture of Country Houses: Including Designs for Cottages, Farm-Houses, and Villas* (New York: D. Appleton, 1852), 29. Along with cottages and Chinese pagodas, Gothic sham ruins were an ingredient in the picturesque. Alice P. Kenney and Leslie J. Workman, "Ruins, Romance, and Reality: Medievalism in Anglo-American Imagination and Taste, 1750–1840," *Winterthur Portfolio* 10 (1975): 131–63.

*publications*. Two of his most important publications were *Cottage Residences* (1842) and the bestselling *The Architecture of Country Houses* (1850).

*gloomth*. The word is a coinage of Horace Walpole, eighteenth-century author of the first Gothic novel.

*novel from 1832.* *The Heidenmauer*, introduction. On the tradition that developed from Cooper on, see John Zukowsky, "Castles on the Hudson," *Winterthur Portfolio* 14.1 (1979): 73–92.

*Fonthill Abbey.* The architect was James Wyatt.

*a very proper habitation.* Horace Walpole, "A Description of the Villa of Mr Horace Walpole at Strawberry-Hill near Twickenham, Middlesex: With an Inventory of the Furniture, Pictures, Curiosities, &c.," in idem, *The Works of Horatio Walpole, Earl of Orford*, 5 vols. (London: G. G. and J. Robinson and J. Edwards, 1798), 2: 393–516, at 398.

*imaginative as opposed to imitative powers.* Letter to Mary Berry, October 17, 1794, in Horace Walpole, *The Letters of Horace Walpole: Fourth Earl of Orford*, ed. Mrs. Paget Toynbee, 16 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1903–1905), 15: 327 (no. 2951): "Every true Goth must perceive that they are more the works of fancy than of imitation."

*A Gothic Story.* *The Castle of Otranto, a Gothic Story* (London: Printed for William Bathoe in the Strand, and Thomas Lownds in Fleet-Street, 1765).

*pointy linearity and gentle curviness.* In a weird way, this esthetic harks back to the picturesque as laid out by Christopher Hussey, *The Picturesque: Studies in a Point of View* (London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1927). From a childhood in a castle, this authority on architecture was exposed to an interchange among architecture, landscape, and environment that influenced many later designers.

*architectural informality.* Michael J. Lewis, *The Gothic Revival* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2002), 57.

*suburban Gothic.* Bernice M. Murphy, *The Suburban Gothic in American Popular Culture* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Martin Dines, "Suburban Gothic and the Ethnic Uncanny in Jeffrey Eugenides's *The Virgin Suicides*," *Journal of American Studies* 46.4 (2012): 959–75.

*backwoods rural Gothic.* Bernice M. Murphy, *The Rural Gothic in American Popular Culture: Backwoods Horror and Terror in the Wilderness* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

*among gardens and green fields.* Letter of March 26, 1874, in J. W. Mackail, *The Life of William Morris*, 2nd ed. (London: Longmans, Green, 1899), 1: 302–3, at 302.

*City Beautiful Movement.* For the analogy between campuses and the City Beautiful movement, see Turner, *Campus*, 163–213 (chap. 5, "The University as City Beautiful"). Turner, however, treats the collegiate Gothic movement as a distinct phase that immediately followed this one.

*the subtle inspiration of beauty.* "Princeton Landscape Gardening," *Princeton Alumni Weekly* 26, June 9, 1926, 949–65, at 965: "We all know education is by no means a mere matter of books, and that aesthetic environment contributes as much to mental growth as facts assimilated from a printed page. No life is well-rounded without the subtle inspiration of beauty." This statement could have been written in essays with nearly identical titles that she later published in the magazines of three universities where the collegiate strain of Gothic revival preponderated: "Landscape Gardening at Princeton," *Princeton Alumni Weekly* 31, May 29, 1931, 819–31; "Landscape Gardening at Yale," *Yale Alumni Weekly* 34, June 1925, 1147–53; and "Landscape Gardening at the University of Chicago," *University of Chicago Magazine* 27 (February 1935): 136–40. The original article and the first and third of the later ones have been reprinted in *The Collected Writings of Beatrix Farrand: American Landscape Gardener (1872–1959)*, ed. Carmen Pearson (Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England, 2009), 116–28, 129–41, 145–51 respectively.

*equipoise with the architecture.* Mark Hough, "The Creation and Restoration of Abele Quad," *Duke Magazine* 102.4 (Fall 2016): 34–41.

*a thousand trees.* Here I rely heavily upon Gumprecht, *American College Town*, 63–65.

### Trees as Nature's Cathedrals

*The Gothic church plainly originated.* Emerson, "History," 15–16. The quote continues: "as the bands about the cleft pillars still indicate the green withes that tied them. No one can walk in a road cut through pine woods, without being struck with the architectural appearance of the grove, especially in winter, when the bareness of all other trees shows the low arch of the Saxons. In the woods in a winter afternoon one will see as readily the origin of the stained-glass window with which the Gothic cathedrals are adorned, in the colours of the western sky seen through the bare and crossing branches of the forest. Nor can any lover of nature enter the old piles of Oxford and the English cathedrals without feeling that the forest overpowered the mind of the builder, and that his chisel, his saw, and plane, still reproduced its ferns, its spikes of flowers, its locust, its pine, its oak, its fir, its spruce."

*closely related.* For a relatively recent suggestion that images of European primeval forests contributed to the rise of arboreal Gothic during the Middle Ages, see Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1995).

*places of prayer made by men and giant nests constructed by termite colonies.* Daniel C. Dennett has drawn the comparison frequently in lectures, interviews, and writings. See especially his *Intuition Pumps and Other Tools for Thinking* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2013), 235.

*suitably shaped formations*. Such features of caverns are discussed in Vol. 4, chapter 4, of the present book.

*John McPhee*. In his book *Basin and Range* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1981), 127.

*a walk of trees*. Arthur O. Lovejoy, *Essays in the History of Ideas* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press, 1948), 153–59, at 153. Lovejoy's piece was published first as "The First Gothic Revival and the Return to Nature," *Modern Language Notes* 47 (1932): 419–46. A good decade later, Stukeley built for his wife a Temple of Flora that incorporated Gothic features, with old stained-glass windows and a bell that its owner visited every morning to ring. Germann, *Gothic Revival*, 53. The garden was located in Stamford. For a detailed consideration, see Matthew M. Reeve, "Of Druids, the Gothic, and the Origins of Architecture: The Garden Designs of William Stukeley (1687–1765)," *British Art Journal* 13.3 (2012): 9–18, at 13–17, with images of specific Gothic features at 14, figs. 15–16.

*tree theory*. On the forest or tree theory, see Paul Frankl, *The Gothic: Literary Sources and Interpretations through Eight Centuries* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1960), 299, 345, 347, 365, 390, 402, 444–45, 457, 467, 476, 482–83, 495, 510, 515, 589, 592, 653, 656, 660, 666, 693–94, 741, 743, 747, 805.

*plaited to form pointed arches*. On this expression of the theory by Pseudo-Raphael, see Frankl, *Gothic*, 273, 403. The same idea was touched upon by the scholars James Anderson and J. Gustav Büsching: see Frankl, *Gothic*, 495 (for Anderson), 511 (for Büsching).

*wicker cathedral*. James Hall, *Essay on the Origin, History, and Principles of Gothic Architecture* (London: John Murray, 1813), previously reproduced in Lewis, *Gothic Revival*, 64, fig. 54; Frankl, *Gothic*, fig. 54 (compare figs. 52–53).

*Victor Hugo himself*. *En Voyage*, 2 (1839): 275 ("Midi de France et Bourgogne"): "The pillars are thick trunks, at the pinnacle of which the sheaves of fillets interweave like shadow-laden branches." Tellingly, *Correspondances*, the most famous lyric in *Les fleurs du mal* (Flowers of evil, 1857) by Charles Baudelaire, begins: "Nature is a temple where living columns / Allow garbled words sometimes to come forth; / Man passes there through forests of symbols / Which watch him with understanding looks." *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Claude Pichois, 2 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1976), 1: 1–145 (for *Les fleurs du mal*), at 11. The French poet's shrine is not an actual one, but in *Obsession*, another lyric in the same collection, the poet goes even further by concocting a simile that relates the immensity of woods to that of cathedrals: "Grands bois, vous m'effrayez comme des cathédrales" ("Great woods, you terrify me like cathedrals"). Baudelaire, *Œuvres complètes*, 1: 75.

*Druids*. Lovejoy, *Essays*, 153–59. In a note on a 1731 epistle of Alexander Pope's, William Warburton made no mention of priests among the Celts, but instead invoked the influence of Muslim (or, to have recourse to his term, Saracen) architecture as he elaborated upon the relationship between trees and Gothic—which was seen fairly often to be a Saracen or Saracenic style, because of similarities to Islamic architecture. William Warburton, note on Alexander Pope, *Moral Essays*, Epistle 4 to Burlington (1731), in *The Works of Alexander Pope Esq.*, 9 vols. (London: Printed for A. Millar, 1760), 3 (*Moral Essays*): 323–55, at 329.

Thomas Hope's two-volume *A Historical Essay on Architecture*, published in 1835, contains an arboreal simile for Gothic, building on James Hall's conjecture that architecture in the style originated in the growth of deciduous trees, especially willows. The English man of letters and churchman had deep personal acquaintance with the architecture, from having held various ecclesiastical posts in actual Gothic churches. Hall, *Essay on the Origin and Principles*, based on a paper presented to the Royal Society of Edinburgh on April 6, 1797. The late nineteenth-century architectural historian Leopold Eidlitz noticed the frequency of such juxtapositions. See his *The Nature and Function of Art, More Especially of Architecture* (New York: A. C. Armstrong & Son, 1881), 217–20.

*Friedrich Schlegel*. Lewis, *Gothic Revival*, 64–65.

*origins of Gothic as a whole*. *Seven Lamps of Architecture*, chap. 2, "The Lamp of Truth," in idem, *Works*, 8: 61 (section 7): "The resemblance in its shafts and ribs to the external relations of stems and branches... has been the ground of so much foolish speculation" and 10: 237 (section 70), "I have therefore alluded to the strange and vain supposition, that the original conception of Gothic architecture had been derived from vegetation..."

*treelike origins*. Jurgis Baltrusaitis, *Aberrations: An Essay on the Legend of Forms*, trans. Richard Miller (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989), 107–35 ("The Romance of Gothic Architecture"). For instance, the Frenchman Huysmans explained, "It is almost certain for me that man found in the woods the aspect so often discussed of naves and the ogive." For this quotation in French (from *La cathédrale*) within a broad discussion of the analogy, see Joëlle Prunghaud, *Figures littéraires de la cathédrale: 1880–1918* (Villeneuve d'Ascq, France: Presses universitaires du Septentrion, 2008), 145. Others would have simply seen the parallel, without forcing the two sides of it into conformity with the principle of cause and effect (see Fig. n.38). Beyond trees, people in the late nineteenth century saw in Gothic finials and quatrefoils a transference from horticulture, specifically the thistle and clover.





Fig. n.38 John Constable, *Salisbury Cathedral from the Bishop's Grounds*, ca. 1825. Oil on canvas, 87.9 × 111.8 cm. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art. Bequest of Mary Stillman Harkness, 1950.

*sacred spaces*. Lynn Ross-Bryant, "Sacred Sites: Nature and Nation in the US National Parks," *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 15.1 (2005): 31–62, especially at 38–40.

*the first formal arboretum*. The Arnold Arboretum, under the aegis of Harvard University, was designed by Frederick Law Olmsted as the second largest link within the so-called Emerald Necklace of parks ringing Boston.

*nature was art, trees were paint brushes*. The first director of the Arnold Arboretum, Charles Sprague Sargent, was a cousin of the great painter, John Singer Sargent.

*back to Gothic*. He presented Mount Washburn in Yellowstone National Park as "spired and turreted like Gothic cathedrals." In his mind, the towering rocks and stones of the landscape and the jutting trees of the forests fulfilled in the United States the same functions as sacred sanctuaries in the Old World. John Muir, *Our National Parks* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1901), 66–67.

*houses of religion*. Rodney James Giblett, *People and Places of Nature and Culture* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 139–56 (chap. 7, "Nature Sanctuarized: 'Our' National Parks as Modern Cathedrals").

*wilderness cathedral*. In 1872, Clarence King wrote of the Sierra Nevada, "the whole mountains shaped themselves like the ruins of cathedrals,—sharp roof-ridges, pinnacled and statued; buttresses more spired and ornamented than Milan's; receding

doorways with pointed arches carved into black façades of granite, doors never to be opened, innumerable jutting points, with here and there a single cruciform peak, its frozen roof and granite spires so strikingly Gothic I cannot doubt that the Alps furnished the models for early cathedrals of that order." Clarence King, *Mountaineering in the Sierra Nevada* (Boston: J. R. Osgood, 1872), 99. My attention was drawn to this passage by Sandweiss, *Passing Strange*, 40–41.

*Cathedral Rocks and Spires.* The name Cathedral Rock was employed for rock formations in La Jolla, California; Acadia National Park, Mt. Desert Island, Bar Harbor, Maine; Pigeon Cove (Rockport), Massachusetts; Bad Lands, Montana; and Ausable Chasm and Genesee Gorge (Letchworth Park, Rochester), New York. Cathedral Spires was also attested in Custer State Park, South Dakota. Yoho National Park in British Columbia, on the western slopes of the Canadian Rocky Mountains, has a crest called Cathedral Mountain or Cathedral Peak (see Fig. n.39), and by a similar associative chain, the pinnacles of one summit in Colorado gave it the name of Gothic Mountain, which in turn spawned what has devolved into the ghost town of Gothic.

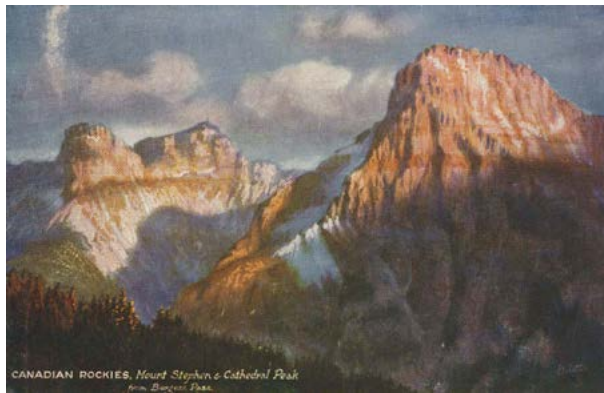


Fig. n.39 Postcard depicting Mount Stephen and Cathedral Peak, Canadian Rockies (London: Raphael Tuck & Sons, 1908).

*The Cathedral.* In the lineage of such earlier foundations would be the more recently established Cathedral Rock Nature Park in San Antonio, Texas.

*Gothic cathedrals.* *John of the Mountains: The Unpublished Journals of John Muir*, ed. Linnie Marsh Wolfe (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1938), 230 (chap. 4, part 4, "Exploring the Sequoia Belt from the Yosemite to the White River, Tulare County, 1875"), quoted (without citation) by Giblett, *People and Places*, 145. Likewise inspired by these giants, the American writer Bret Harte marveled, in an ode on a cone, at the age and grandeur of the big tree from which it came: "He saw the age of sacred trees, / And Druid groves and mystic larches; / And saw from forest domes like these / The builder bring his Gothic arches." In this spirit, we find postcards from the early twentieth century

celebrating the “world’s largest redwood: Cathedral Tree” in the “Trees of Mystery Park” on the Redwood Highway, California (see Figs. n.40 and n.41). The oversized plant acquired this name from its columnar appearance. Effectively, it comprises nine close-set trees that spring from the roots of a single mother. Still more suggestive is a card depicting a couple, appropriately in their Sunday best, seated as if on the pews of the “Cathedral Group, Big Tree Grove, near Santa Cruz, CA.” (See Figs. n.42 and n.43) When Muir was honored by having Muir Woods National Monument named after him, it was all but foreordained that one stand of such red giants would become known as Cathedral Grove (see Fig. n.44).



Fig. n.40 Postcard depicting the “Cathedral Tree,” Redwood Highway, CA (Portland, OR: Sawyer’s, early twentieth century).



Fig. n.41 Postcard depicting “the World’s Largest Cathedral Tree,” Redwood Highway, CA (early twentieth century).





Fig. n.42 Postcard depicting the Cathedral Group, Big Tree Grove, near Santa Cruz, CA (San Francisco, CA: Pacific Novelty Company, early twentieth century).

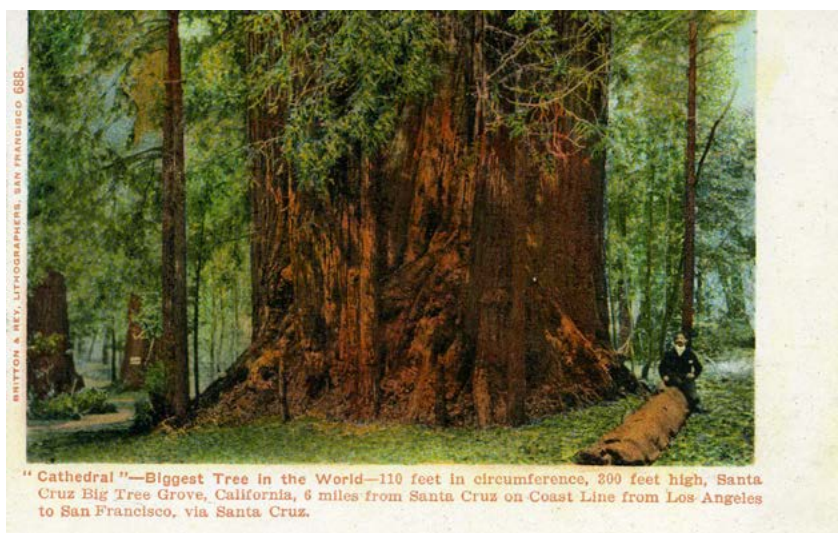


Fig. n.43 Postcard depicting Cathedral Redwood, Big Tree Grove, near Santa Cruz, CA (San Francisco, CA: Britton & Rey, early twentieth century).

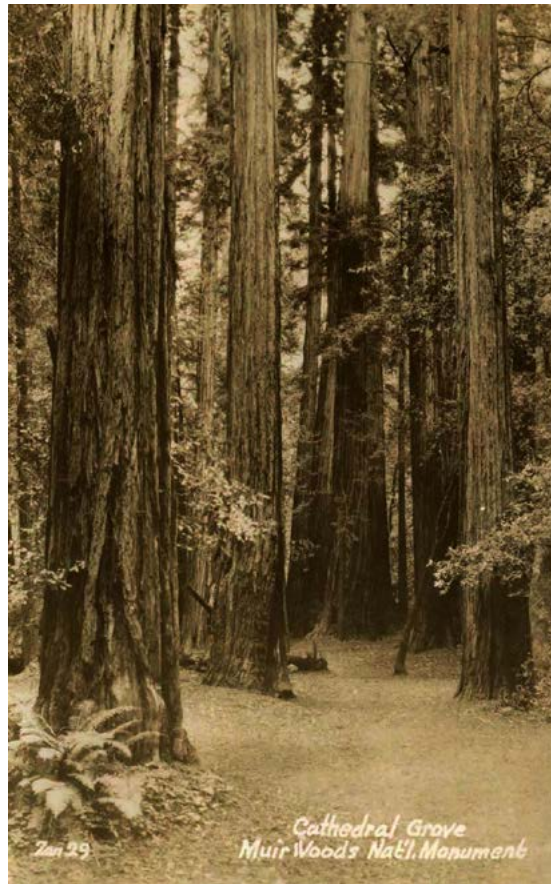


Fig. n.44 Postcard depicting Cathedral Grove, Muir Woods, CA  
(early twentieth century).

*an archway of rugged grandeur*. The anonymous “Heavy Harness,” *Turf, Field and Farm* 70, June 21, 1901: 592.

*this analogy verged on vapidness*. Already in 1858, Henry David Thoreau wrote in his *Journal* of “the quiet and somewhat sombre aisles of a forest cathedral.” Henry David Thoreau, *Journal*, ed. Bradford Torrey and Francis H. Allen, 2 vols. (New York: Dover, 1962), 2: 1402 (11: 353), cited by Giblett, *People and Places*, 143. Elsewhere, he made the same analogy come alive in a way that pitted the New World explicitly against the Old, putting the pines of New England on a par with the haute couture of Paris by drawing a comparison between the patterns imprinted upon the trees by winter with “the designs and ciphers of books of heraldry.” Finally, he laid out a similitude to connect the arboreal with the architectural: “You glance up these paths, closely imbowered by bent trees, as though through the side aisles of a cathedral, and expect to hear a choir chanting from their depths.” January 30, 1841, in *Journal*, 1: 64 (ed. Torrey and Allen, 1: 184–85).



*My Cathedral*. The sonnet is part of a poetry collection: see Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *Ultima Thule* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1880), 51–52. Already decades earlier, the writer formulated the analogy between elms and architectural features of churches, presumably Gothic: see Longfellow's journal entry of December 12, 1849, in idem, *The Works of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*, 14 vols. (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1891), 13: 164.

Although not necessarily owing to his direct influence, the place-name Cathedral Pines has been used repeatedly since the late nineteenth century as an unhedging descriptor for camps, campgrounds, nature reserves, vacation developments, and other such locales (see Fig. n.45), as, for instance, in Colorado, Connecticut, Idaho, Maine, and Wisconsin. From roughly the same time, and from the same analogizing reflex, is the site known as Cathedral Oaks in New Smyrna, Florida. The wide-set oak trees have upper branches, clad in Spanish moss, which curve to meet in a close canopy like a nave (see Fig. n.46). Such comparisons did not occur to the purveyors of postcards alone. For example, we find a 1906 description that correlates the rose window in the cathedral of Bourges with a star as it appears "at the end of an alley of trees." Arthur Symons, "Cathedrals," in idem, *Studies in Seven Arts* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1906), 151–72, at 170. Nor was it restricted to the United States: in 1921, an artist in New Zealand by the name of Charles Blomfield produced an oil painting entitled *The Vaulted Aisles of Nature's Cathedral* that focuses upon the same similarity (see Fig. n.47).



Fig. n.45 Postcard depicting "Cathedral Pines" (early twentieth century).



Fig. n.46 Postcard depicting Cathedral Oaks, New Smyrna, FL (Seabreeze, FL: Peninsula Publishing Co., early twentieth century).



Fig. n.47 Charles Blomfield, *The Vaulted Aisles of Nature's Cathedral*, 1921. Oil on canvas, 157.5 × 111 cm. Auckland, New Zealand, Auckland War Memorial Museum—Tamaki Paenga Hira. Image courtesy of the Auckland War Memorial Museum, Auckland, New Zealand. All rights reserved.

*perimeter of the campus*. Turner, *Campus*, 223.

*the Bok Singing Tower*. The latest study is Kenneth Treister, *Bok Tower Gardens: America's Taj Mahal* (New York: Skira Rizzoli, 2013).

*hybrid cultivar*. On *Ulmus pumila* x *Ulmus japonica*, see Cassandra Biggerstaff et al., "Sustainable Urban Landscapes: Dutch Elm Disease and Disease-Resistant Elms," p. 10, [www.extension.iastate.edu/Publications/SUL4.pdf](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/Publications/SUL4.pdf).

*upper boughs form arches*. Oliver Wendell Holmes expressed this aspect of elms beautifully in his novel, *Elsie Venner: A Romance of Destiny* (chap. 5, "An Old-Fashioned Descriptive Chapter": "No natural Gothic arch compares, for a moment, with that formed by two American elms..."). See Thomas J. Campanella, *Republic of Shade: New England and the American Elm* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 133–38, at 136. Campanella led me to the next passages quoted, from Beecher through Hawthorne.

*superiority of nature to architecture*. Henry Ward Beecher, "Towns and Trees," in *Star Papers or Experiences of Art and Nature* (New York: J. C. Derby, 1855), <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/009578959>, 129–36, at 133: "We had rather walk beneath an avenue of elms than inspect the noblest cathedral that art ever accomplished." The quotation, but not this citation, appears in Campanella, *Republic of Shade*, 136n49.

*it had in these plants their arboreal equivalents*. Nehemiah Adams, a distant relative of Henry Adams, noted of the specimens on Boston Common "a perspective view of them gives as good a representation of Gothic architecture as man ever copied. A traveler might almost fancy himself again in York cathedral." Nehemiah Adams, *The Boston Common, or, Rural Walks in Cities by a Friend of Improvement* (Boston: G. W. Light, 1838), <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/008890658>, 14–15. Likewise, upon inspecting a park in London, Nathaniel Hawthorne drew a likeness between Old and New World elms that worked much to the disfavor of the English ones, specifically because "Our trees, 'high over-arched, with echoing walks between,' have the greater resemblance to the Gothic aisle of a cathedral." Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The English Notebooks, Based upon the Original Manuscripts in the Pierpont Morgan Library*, ed. Randall Stewart, repr. (New York: Russell and Russell, 1962), 390. The passage quotes a line from John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (book 9: 1107). Traveling in the opposite direction, Charles Dickens visited New Haven on a trip to North America in 1842. He extolled the municipality in Connecticut for the canopy of mature trees that arose from its public tree planting. (The shady deal that the city planners struck gave the place the nickname "The Elm City.") Admiring the tree-lined and -shaded streets, he observed how the rows helped an urban setting retain small-town atmosphere and beauty, while also connecting the United States to his home country: "the effect is very like that of an old cathedral yard in England; and when their branches are in full leaf, must be extremely picturesque." Charles Dickens, *American Notes for General Circulation*, chap. 5, "Worcester. The Connecticut River. Hartford. New Haven. To New York," in idem, *Works*, Gadshill edition, 38 vols. (London: Chapman and Hall, 1897–1908), 28: 90. Another Briton at the end of the nineteenth century saw in the tree-lined avenues of the city in Connecticut "Gothic aisles of rich green and sunlit interlacing bows. William Smith, *A Yorkshireman's Trip to the United States and Canada* (London: Longman's, Green, 1892), 151. This passage is quoted and cited in Campanella, *Republic of Shade*, 137. Just so, an American exulted "New Haven is a vast cathedral, with aisles for streets." Nathaniel Parker Willis (Yale class of 1827), quoted in Henry E. Legler, *James Gates*

*Percival: An Anecdotal Sketch and a Bibliography* (Milwaukee, WI: The Mequon Club, 1901), 44. Willis's poem "Elms of New Haven" extends the analogy.

*The Green Cathedral*. In Dutch, "De Groene Kathedraal."

*growing a medieval Gothic cathedral out of poplars*. Joseph Spence, *Observations, Anecdotes, and Characters of Books and Men Collected from Conversation*, ed. James M. Osborn, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), 1: 249–57 ("Pope on Gardening"), 256.

*cultivating a great church of such trees in Philadelphia*. Montgomery C. Meigs, Letter, June 27, 1870, printed in Samuel Sloan, "Sylvan Temple," *The Architectural Review and Builders' Journal* 3 (August 1870): 65–67, at 66. The proposed cathedral, shaped from live trees, is illustrated in the frontispiece.

## Collegiate Gothic Havens

*Gracious God*. Ralph Adams Cram, Richard Upjohn, and John La Farge, architects: collect for Friday, December 16. This short prayer (with La Farge's family name spelt with no space between the two elements) appeared first in *Holy Women, Holy Men: Celebrating the Saint* (New York: Church Publications, 2010), among one hundred or so new entries.

*medievaesque ideals*. On the Gothic revival in the United States, see Loth and Sadler, *Only Proper Style*.

*cloister of the soul*. The earliest instance was Hugh of Fouillooy (ca. 1100–ca. 1172), *De clauistro animae*. See Christiania Whitehead, "Making a Cloister of the Soul in Medieval Religious Treatises," *Medium Aevum* 67.1 (1998): 1–29, at 3.

*given up to a selfish materialism*. A. D. F. Hamlin, "Recent American College Architecture," *The Outlook*, August 1, 1903: 791–99, at 799: "These buildings represent an enormous financial investment; and it must be remembered that this physical growth means also a great increase in expenditure for maintenance and administration. All this is significant of the disposition of the American people to increase their financial investment in the higher education—an investment not only in buildings, which, taken alone, might mean mere luxury, but in all that for which the buildings stand, and to promote which they were built—science, literature, religion, and intellectual culture of every kind. The American scholar may well point to these edifices with pride, assured that a hundred years from now many will still be looked upon with admiration, as monuments of the intellectual and artistic enthusiasm of an age too often accounted as wholly given up to a selfish materialism."

*larger donations.* James Gamble Rogers to William A. Dyche, October 9, 1930, Minutes of the Board of Trustees, October 28, 1930, Northwestern University Archives, quoted by Betsky, *James Gamble Rogers*, 57.

*unity in variety.* The phrase acquired heft from its usage in reference to the cathedral of Chartres by Walter Pater in his unfinished novel, *Gaston de Latour*, chap. 2. In the same passage, Gaston is described as having himself a “somewhat Gothic soul.” For a couple of later examples, see Frederick L. Ackerman, “The Influence on Architecture of the Condition of the Worker,” *Journal of the American Institute of Architects* 2 (1914): 547–55, at 551; George Park Fisher, *A Brief History of the Nations and of Their Progress in Civilization* (New York: American Book Company, 1896), 564.

*adds a millennium.* Ray Stannard Baker, *Woodrow Wilson; Life and Letters*, 8 vols. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Page, 1927–1939), 2: 129–212 (“President of Princeton University”), at 174: “By the very simple device of building our new buildings in the Tudor Gothic style we seem to have added a thousand years to the history of Princeton, by merely putting those lines in our buildings which point every man’s imagination to the historical traditions of learning in the English-speaking race. We have declared and acknowledged our derivation and lineage; we have said, ‘This is the spirit in which we have been bred,’ and as the imagination, as the recollection of classes yet to be graduated from Princeton are affected by the suggestions of that architecture, we shall find the past of this country married with the past of the world and shall know with what destiny we have come into the forefront of nations.” Baker quotes from *The Public Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 2 vols. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1925), 1: 463–64.

*back hundreds of years.* Upon visiting the neo-Gothic extravaganza of Görlitz palace in 1799, Charles-Joseph, the seventh Prince de Ligne, observed: “Never has there been anything as accomplished, never anything that has been executed so well; everything here is so thorough that one believes oneself to be three hundred years younger.” See David M. Wilson, “The Roots of Medievalism in North-West Europe: National Romanticism, Architecture, Literature,” in *Manufacturing Middle Ages: Entangled History of Medievalism in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, ed. Patrick J. Geary and Gábor Klaniczay (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2013), 111–37, at 122.

*racial Anglo-Saxonism.* Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*. More stridently, Cram, never renowned for his moderation, admitted that when swayed by “the subtle obsession of the ivied Old World, the call of inextinguishable race-memory enters in and blots out reason and analysis.” “The Work of Messrs. Cope & Stewardson,” *Architectural Record* 16 (November 1904): 407–38, at 411. Still, note the imperative in his following sentence: “Shake off the dream, for it betrays judgment.” Yes, Cram took his offering of panegyric for the architecture of Cope and Stewardson as the occasion for analogizing their designs with “indestructible race fealty” and “religious continuity”



(p. 413). Yet once again, he qualified his pronouncement. In doing so, he undercut at least a little what the subsequent history of racism both inside and outside academic settings in the United States might lead us to find irredeemably sinister in his avowal.

*construction techniques.* Clark, “Ralph Adams Cram.” Two passages are particularly relevant. First, Cram, *Ministry of Art*, <https://archive.org/details/ministryofart00cram>, 208–9: “We do, indeed, indulge in skeleton construction and reinforced concrete and other structural expedients and substitutes, but deep in our racial consciousness, as in that of all other Anglo-Saxon peoples, is the solid conviction that, after all, there are but three real things in the world,—the home, the school and the Church,—and when we are dealing with eternal verities, honest and enduring construction is alone advisable.” Second, Cram, *Church Building: A Study of the Principles of Architecture in their Relation to the Church* (Boston: Small, Maynard & Co. 1901), <https://archive.org/details/churchbuildinga03cramgoog>, 190–91: “The English [Gothic] is ours; for we two are one people, with one history and one blood. I do not mean that we must be imitative or archaeological. We may take what we will from France or Spain or Flanders; but let us apply it all to the English root, so creating a thing that is racial and—our own.”

*exclusion of the unlike.* The medieval architecture is not what drove the emergence of quotas on the admission of Jewish applicants or of outright bans against African-Americans. For succinct treatment, see Alex Duke, *Importing Oxbridge: English Residential Colleges and American Universities* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996), 92–93. For more details, see Marcia Graham Synnott, *The Half-Opened Door: Discrimination and Admissions at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton, 1900–1970*, Contributions in American History, vol. 80 (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1979). For example, Woodrow Wilson supported what was for the time (and for him, in view of his many unprepossessing prejudices) an open policy in the consideration of applicants for admission. He backed collegiate Gothic as strongly as did his opponents at Princeton University in this regard. Even so, the wistfulness for the imagined races that once inhabited England and Normandy could have justified the shutting out of many minorities whose religions, cultures, and physical appearance failed to fit the romanticized and restrictive norm.

*At their best.* Less happily, the support could take an illiberal bent, which an architect such as Ralph Adams Cram would have only rallied. His utopian spouting, *Walled Towns* (Boston: Marshall Jones, 1919), <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/001595080>, is a polemic about civilization far more than merely about architecture, and it has been styled “nothing less than a manifesto for neo-medievalist society.” For the quotation, see Matthews, *Medievalism*, 100. Although not directly, the book is related to his definition of a university as a “walled city against materialism.”

## Ivy League and Ivory Tower

*ivory towers.* The metaphor goes back to a verse in the Song of Songs (also known as the Canticle of Canticles or Song of Solomon, 7:4) in which the bridegroom assures the bride that her neck is “as an ivory tower.” Biblical exegetes took the bride to be the Church. Eventually, the likeness was applied by Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve to his friend Alfred de Vigny. Theodore Ziolkowski, *The View from the Tower: Origins of an Antimodernist Image* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 29–31.

*In contradistinction, the real world.* This point hardly needs belaboring, but confirmation of the stock opposition between the ivory tower and the real world can be found for instance in the title of H. Douglas Brown, “From Ivory Tower to Real World: A Search for Relevance,” *Georgetown University Roundtable in Languages and Linguistics* (GURT ’83) (1983): 53–59.

*Gothic tower.* The most influential early exemplar may have been the double dormitory of Pembroke Hall at Bryn Mawr in 1894 (see Fig. n.48), soon corseted in ivy as if it had been in place for centuries. This building had reprises in both Blair Hall at Princeton University, built in 1897, and Brookings Hall at Washington University in Saint Louis, from 1900 to 1902 (see Fig. n.49).

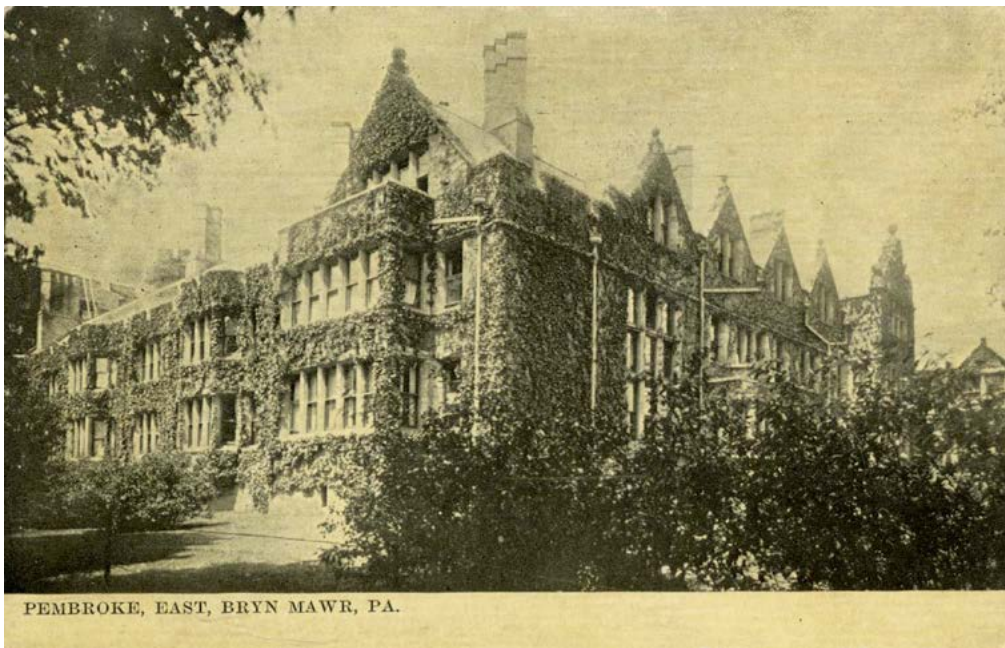


Fig. n.48 Postcard depicting Pembroke Hall, Bryn Mawr College, Bryn Mawr, PA (New York: Ess & Ess Photo Co., ca. 1914).



Fig. n.49 Postcard depicting Washington University, St. Louis, MO  
(St. Louis, MO: Gibson Merchandise Co., early twentieth century).

*Carolingian form of monasticism.* Andrew Fleming West, *Alcuin and the Rise of the Christian Schools* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1892), <https://archive.org/details/alcuinriseofchri00westiala>

*ivy-mantled crenellated towers.* "A Retrospective Review of the California University Competition," *The Builder* 77.2966, December 9, 1899: 523–26, at 524. The same spirit appears in the opening sentence of a solicitation for donations from alumni that was distributed on December 20, 2016 by Duke University: "The Gothic style of the building above is unmistakably Duke, and so is what's behind the stone."

*the elder of the dead president's two sons.* Richard Cleveland (Princeton class of 1919).

*unfurl Old Glory.* W. Barksdale Maynard, "Away from the Horde," *Princeton Alumni Weekly*, September 18, 2013, 38–44, at 40. For obvious reasons, no color photograph of the occasion exists, but many surviving postcards show the Stars and Stripes billowing atop Gothic towers on other campuses. Within the nationalism of the times, the Old Glory in these cards semaphores the all-important matter of the country in which the building is located.

*iconic status.* To indicate that the university had become a truly bicameral institution with an undergraduate college and a graduate school, the cover of the *Princeton Alumni Weekly* morphed. From the December 13, 1916, issue on, the weekly issues bookended Cleveland Tower, as an emblem of the Graduate College, with Holder Tower, signifying the Undergraduate College. Seasonwein, *Princeton and the Gothic Revival*, 53–54 (see Fig. n.50).

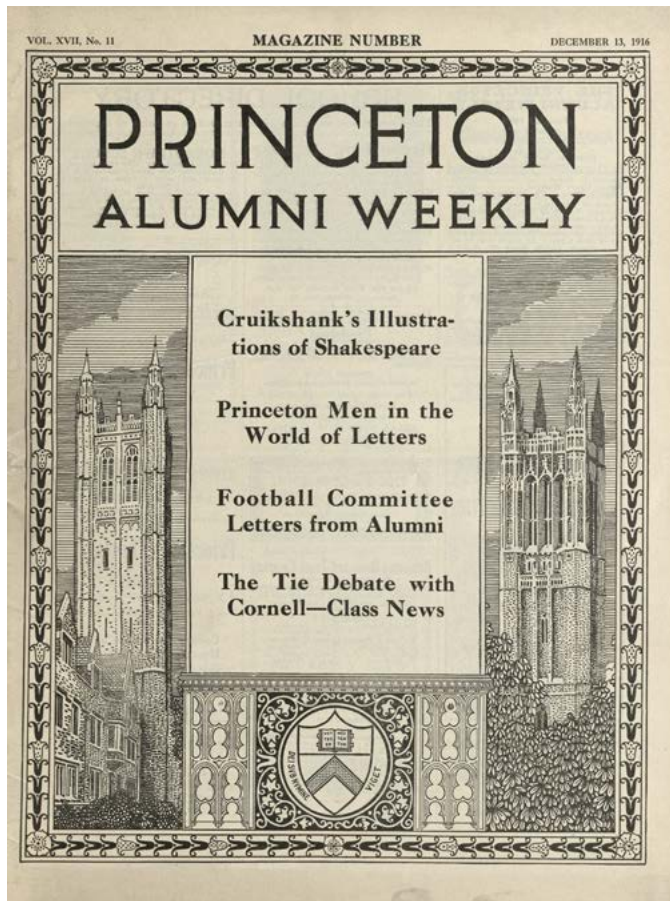


Fig. n.50 Front cover of *Princeton Alumni Weekly* 17.11, December 13, 1916.

*abolishing the presence of earlier forms.* The frou-frou Carpenter Gothic of the First Parish Church was scoured away as an undesired excrescence in 1915. At that crossroad, the edifice, not formally part of the university but relied upon heavily by it in the nineteenth century, was remade as if it had been Colonial from its inception. The deliberate architectonic mimicry of the original Cambridge in England that had been foregrounded in Gore Hall was razed, without a backward glance, to make way for the Beaux Arts design of Widener Library. The medievaesque Appleton Chapel was torn down for the present Memorial Church, in Georgian revival.

*well removed geographically.* Andover Hall stands nearer the neighboring town of Somerville than Harvard Square or Yard. The design for the building was widely disseminated already by 1903. Construction was completed in 1911. Its architects, Francis R. Allen and Charles Collens, designed in Gothic revival style The Cloisters as well as the Union Theological Seminary in New York City (see Fig. n.51), and the Thompson Memorial Library at Vassar College (see Fig. n.52).



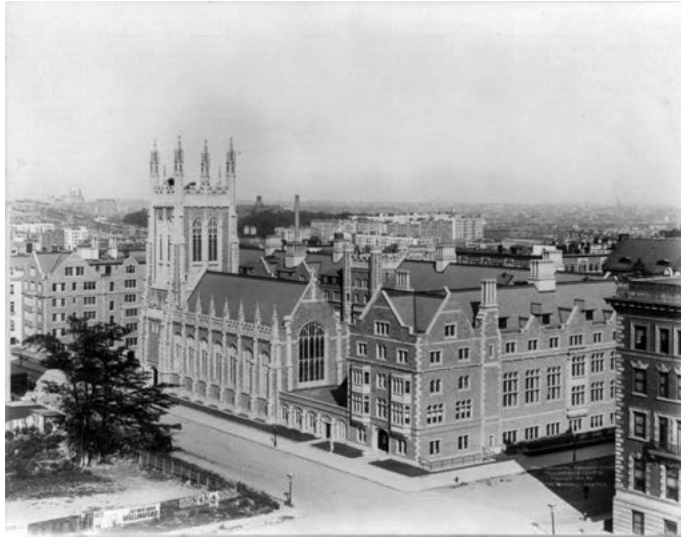


Fig. n.51 Union Theological Seminary. Photograph by Irving Underhill, ca. 1910. Washington, DC, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.



Fig. n.52 Postcard depicting Thompson Memorial Library, Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, NY (ca. 1908).

*formed an alliance with Harvard Divinity School.* The two shared the campus for eighteen years, until the merger was nullified by the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts in 1931. At that juncture, the hulking collegiate Gothic structure remained the possession of the Harvard Divinity School, while the original seminary joined in a new affiliation that enabled a move of its students to the western suburb of Newton. The story of the union, disunion, and federation is recounted in Henry K. Rowe, *History of Andover Theological Seminary* (Newton, MA: Thomas Todd Printers, 1933), <https://archive.org/details/historyofandover00rowe>, 200–5.



Andover Hall echoes, if only loosely, the earlier Gothic erections constructed between 1866 and 1871 at the nearby Episcopal Theological Seminary, whose architects were Ware and Van Brunt. The collegiate Gothic design can and has been faulted, but at least its spiritual associations have helped to cushion the Divinity School from the fates that befell earlier buildings in other styles at Harvard for the study of theology: the former library became the herbarium, while the old Divinity Hall became dormitories. Bainbridge Bunting, *Harvard: An Architectural History*, ed. Margaret Henderson Floyd (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1985), 111–12.

*Gasson Hall and its tower*. Meister, *Arts and Crafts*, 148–49. The Boston College campus also contains the 1928 Bapst Library (see Fig. n.53) with Ford Tower. Yet Gasson Tower is the centerpiece of the campus.



Fig. n.53 Postcard depicting Bapst Library, Boston College, Chestnut Hill, MA (date unknown).

*other tall structures*. Three examples would be Cleveland Tower at Princeton, constructed from 1913 to 1917; Harkness Tower at Yale, from 1917 to 1921 (see Fig. n.54); and Chapel Tower at Duke, from 1930 to 1935. The 216-foot Harkness, despite having a steel-and-concrete frame, looks like pure masonry. Its exterior stone was designed by James Gamble Rogers in part to replicate the *couronne* or “crown” fashion of English Perpendicular Gothic, particularly as articulated in Boston Stump, the tower of the parish church of Saint Botolph in Boston, England. It also betrays the influence of Rouen Cathedral’s *Tour de beurre* or “Butter Tower.” A final tower not to be omitted is at West Point. The 180-foot projection of Taylor Hall—also called at various points Post Headquarters, Administration Building, and Building 600 (see Fig. n.55)—completed in 1910 by Cram, Goodhue, and Ferguson, has been misrepresented as the highest all-stone masonry edifice in the world.



Fig. n.54 Postcard depicting Branford Court and Harkness Memorial Tower, Yale University, New Haven, CT (New Haven, CT: Edward P. Judd Company, early twentieth century).



Fig. n.55 Postcard depicting the Administration Building, West Point, NY (New York: Leighton & Valentine Co., early twentieth century).

*the tube was not horizontal but vertical.* Eventually, the Gothic cylinder was bound to become animate and to shimmy free from the monopoly of universities—to wriggle away from the gravitational pull of the ivory. In 1929, the Philadelphia architect Milton B. Medary designed a campanile in a site in central Florida due east of Tampa that was intended to bring home the close relationship between the architecture and landscape. The tracery of its lancets exactly copies native trees, while the pinnacles above taper into birds found locally (see Figs. n.56 and n.57). To round off the sense of unity with the environment, the Bok Singing Tower is located beside Lake Wales, in a sanctuary planned by none other than the great landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted. For all that, the sylvan setting was not the only direction in which collegiate Gothic could be taken.



Fig. n.56 Postcard depicting Singing Tower, Lake Wales, FL (Lakeland, FL: Ridge Distributing Company, date unknown).



Fig. n.57 Postcard depicting flamingos at the Singing Tower, Lake Wales, FL (date unknown).

## Notes to Chapter 6

*The true Romanticist.* Bertram C. Goodhue, "The Romanticist Point of View," *The Craftsman: An Illustrated Monthly Magazine* 8.3 (June 1905): 332–33, at 332. Goodhue's piece is a reply to Lamb's "Modern Use of the Gothic" in the previous issue.

### The Origins of Gothic Skyscrapers

*The Gothic style was the crowning achievement.* Pierson, *American Buildings and Their Architects*, 91.

*no parallel, but a striking prototype.* Montgomery Schuyler, *American Architecture, and Other Writings*, ed. William H. Jordy and Ralph Coe, 2 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1961), 2: 420.

*extended horizontally.* Schuyler, *American Architecture and Other Writings*, 2: 618: "This predominance of the vertical dimension would of itself tend to ally the construction with the Gothic idea of aspiration rather than with the idea of horizontal extension which the Greeks inherited or took over from the Egyptians, and would of itself suggest a Gothic rather than a classic treatment of detail."

*techniques of great churches.* Frederick Stymetz Lamb, "Modern Use of the Gothic: The Possibilities of New Architectural Style," *The Craftsman: An Illustrated Monthly Magazine* 8 (1905): 150–70, at 169.

*style of choice for verticality.* Morey, "Mediaeval Art and America," 5: "the vertical accent of Gothic is used to underline the towering steel bones of our efficient buildings."

*the quintessence of the modern.* Oexle, "Die gotische Kathedrale."

*principal designers.* The lead architects were the Dublin-based Irish Thomas Deane and Benjamin Woodward.

*polychromatic Gothic.* For close attention to the respective contributions of Deane, Woodward, and Ruskin, see Eve Blau, *Ruskinian Gothic: The Architecture of Deane and Woodward, 1845–1861* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982), 48–81.

*one of the two lead participants.* Benjamin Woodward.

*techno-Gothic.* George P. Landow, "Early Techno-Gothic: The Oxford University Natural History Museum," 2007, [www.victorianweb.org/art/architecture/oxford/9.html](http://www.victorianweb.org/art/architecture/oxford/9.html).



*Crystal Palace*. It was the design of an architect named Sir Joseph Paxton.

*erected for the first few years*. It was expanded when rebuilt in South London, where it lingered on from 1854 until its destruction by fire in 1936.

*High Victorian Gothic*. Hersey, *High Victorian Gothic*, 154–63.

*Mediaeval Court*. M. Digby Wyatt and J. B. Waring, *The Mediaeval Court in the Crystal Palace* (London: Crystal Palace Library, Bradbury & Evans, 1854).

*cathedrals of consumption*. The phrase appears in both a major title and a major subtitle: Geoffrey Crossick and Serge Jaumain, eds., *Cathedrals of Consumption: The European Department Store, 1850–1939* (Aldershot, Hants, UK: Ashgate, 1999); George Ritzer, *Enchanting a Disenchanted World: Continuity and Change in the Cathedrals of Consumption*, 3rd ed. (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2010).

*Glass Pavilion*. In German, *Das Glashaus*.

*concrete and glass*. The designer was Bruno Taut. *Kristallisationen, Splitterungen: Bruno Tauts Glashaus* (Basel, Switzerland: Birkhäuser, 1993).

*German Association of Craftsmen*. In German, *Deutscher Werkbund*.

*precursor to modernism*. The German caption to an official rendering of the pavilion reads in English, “The Gothic Cathedral is the Prelude to Glass Architecture.”

*Bauhaus*. The German word, translatable very literally as “build house” or “construction house,” implies “school of building” or “architecture house.”

*extolling medieval stained-glass windows*. “Tightly held between supporting piers they opened a door to allow a glimpse of paradise in luminous colours from the shadow of the grave.”

*A new glass age has begun*. Arthur Korn, *Glass in Modern Architecture of the Bauhaus Period*, trans. Dennis Sharp (New York: G. Braziller, 1968), 6, translated from introduction to the first edition, *Glas im Bau und als Gebrauchsgegenstand* (Berlin-Charlottenburg: Ernst Pollak 1929), 5.

*standpipes, water towers, and pumping stations*. Loth and Sadler, *Only Proper Style*, 130–32.

*Erected from 1869 to 1883*. By the German-born John Augustus Roebling (see Fig. n.58) and his son and daughter-in-law Washington and Emily Roebling.





Fig. n.58 John Augustus Roebling. Photograph, ca. 1866–1867. Photographer unknown. New York, Brooklyn Museum, Photographs Collection, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Brooklyn\\_Museum\\_-\\_John\\_Augustus\\_Roebling.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Brooklyn_Museum_-_John_Augustus_Roebling.jpg)

*In height.* The steeples are 276.5 feet tall.

*built.* The architect was Richard Upjohn.

*influence of Pugin.* Lewis, *Gothic Revival*, 88–90.

*slightly later.* From 1886 to 1894.

*laid out the basis.* Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc, *Lectures of Architecture*, trans. Benjamin Bucknall (Boston: J. R. Osgood, 1881).

*recognized by 1880.* P. B. Wight, "On the Present Condition of Architectural Art in the Western States," *American Art Review* 1 (1880): 137–43, at 138.

*finished in 1851.* Designed by William L. Johnston for its site on Chestnut Street, it was razed a little more than a century later, in 1957.

*constructed between 1883 and 1885.* It was later demolished.

*Principles and Practice of Architecture.* Sanford E. Loring and W. L. B. Jenney, *Principles and Practice of Architecture: Comprising Forty-Six Folio Plates of Plans, Elevations and Details of Churches, Dwellings and Stores* (Chicago: Cobb, Pritchard, 1869), <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/100122363>. Loring was his first partner.

*through the media of iron and steel.* Donald L. Miller, *City of the Century: The Epic of Chicago and the Making of America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 335–44.

*compared ever so poorly.* Weir, *Decadent Culture*, 11–15.

## The Cathedral of Commerce

*the skyscrapers of their day.* Miller, *City of the Century*, 339.

*Woolworth Building.* At 233 Broadway, it was designed by Cass Gilbert. See Margaret Heilbrun, ed., *Inventing the Skyline: The Architecture of Cass Gilbert* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 257–71; Gail Fenske, “Medievalism, Mysticism, and Modernity in Early Twentieth-Century New York: Cass Gilbert’s ‘Skyscraper Gothic,’” in Murphy and Reilly, *Skyscraper Gothic*, 55–87.

*tallest inhabited edifice in the world.* Gail Fenske, *The Skyscraper and the City: The Woolworth Building and the Making of Modern New York* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 280 (on Eiffel Tower); Robert A. Jones, “Mr. Woolworth’s Tower: The Skyscraper as Popular Icon,” *Journal of Popular Culture* 7.2 (1973): 408–24.

*West Street Building.* Heilbrun, *Inventing the Skyline*, 249–57.

*Cathedral of Commerce.* The expression was used first by Alan Francis, “Yours is Land of Contrast,” *New York Times*, April 27, 1913, as pointed out by Elizabeth Emery, “The Corporate Gothic of New York’s Woolworth Building: The Function of Form in the Original ‘Cathedral of Commerce,’” *Studies in Medievalism* 22 (2013): 1–10, at 1 n2.

*recreated the architectural marvels.* Jones, “Mr. Woolworth’s Tower,” 417: “There are more beautiful things. The renowned Parthenon, the wonder that was Rheims Cathedral and others of the greatest works of man in Europe; but for beauty and sublimity combined there is nothing which surpasses the Woolworth Tower.”

*guidebook to the edifice.* S. Parkes Cadman, “Foreword,” in Edwin A. Cochran, *The Cathedral of Commerce: The Highest Building in the World* (New York: Broadway Park Place Co., 1918), <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/100570886>, 5–6: “Just as religion monopolized art and architecture during the Medieval epoch, so commerce has engrossed the United States since 1865... The writer looked upon it and at once cried out, ‘The Cathedral of Commerce’—the chosen habitation of that spirit in man which, through means of change and barter, binds alien people into unity and peace, and reduces the hazards of war and bloodshed. Such is its testimony due to Frank W. Woolworth, whose magnitude of mind originated the scheme, and to Cass Gilbert, whose genius executed it to the last detail. To these men, America pays a lasting tribute, and their accomplishment will remain at the heart of the world of trade, a lofty example of the best possibilities in human nature, even when engaged in mercantile pursuits.”

*inspired by his admiration.* Jones, “Mr. Woolworth’s Tower,” 412.

*vertical transportation.* Katherine Solomonson, *The Chicago Tribune Tower Competition: Skyscraper Design and Cultural Change in the 1920s* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 179–80.

*electrical illumination*. Cochran, *Cathedral of Commerce*, 7: “On the night of April 24, 1913, President Wilson pressed a tiny button in the White House and 80,000 brilliant lights instantly flashed throughout the Woolworth Building.”

*At dusk, its gigantic Tower*. *Cathedral of Commerce*, 17.

## The Tribune Tower

*Tribune Tower*. The building, located at 435 North Michigan Avenue, rises to a height of 462 feet.

*major city newspaper*. In my treatment of the Tribune Tower, I am beholden to Solomonson, *Chicago Tribune Tower Competition*, 149–95. For a concise later consideration of the building, see Katherine M. Solomonson, “Tribune Tower: Medievalism and Memory in the Wake of the Great War,” in Murphy and Reilly, *Skyscraper Gothic*, 112–33.

*seventy-fifth anniversary*. The competition was staged in 1922.

*Raymond Hood*. The same architect has also been celebrated for a building in New York City that he designed shortly after the Chicago Tribune Tower Competition. See Christine G. O’Malley, “Radiant Heat and Glowing Lights: Raymond Hood’s American Radiator Building,” in Murphy and Reilly, *Skyscraper Gothic*, 183–210.

*Art Deco business centers*. For example, the Daily News Building in New York City.

*Eliel Saarinen*. Father of the architect and industrial designer Eero Saarinen.

*provocation to imagination*. “This building, one of the most beautiful in the world, is not presented as something to be imitated or copied, but for ‘inspiration by comparison.’”

*largest spire*. *Chicago Sunday Tribune*, July 30, 1922, B14 (*Coloroto Magazine*).

*Hall of Inscriptions*. South wall, east half.

*quotation*. “Therefore, when we build let us think that we build forever. Let it not be for present delight nor for present use alone. Let it be such work as our descendants will thank us for, and let us think as we lay stone upon stone that a time is to come when those stones will be held sacred because our hands have touched them and that men will say as they look upon the labor and the wrought substance of them, ‘See! this our fathers did for us.’”

*not old but new*. Lamb, “Modern Use of the Gothic,” 170: “Viollet-le-Duc said that nothing, at that day, ‘unless it be the commercial movement which has covered Europe with railway lines, can give an idea of the zeal with which the urban population set about the building of cathedrals.’ If Viollet-le-Duc were living today [in 1905!], would he not find in the commercial movement which is creating the great modern office

building and all that this implies, with its constructive necessities and constructive possibilities, a source of inspiration for a new architectural development?"

*singled out*. *Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 20, 1922, B18 (*Coloroto Magazine*).

*Amiens*. Like Rouen, also in France.

*Mechlin*. Mechelen, in Flanders.

*first cousins*. On Robert McCormick and Joseph Patterson, see Solomonson, *Chicago Tribune Tower Competition*, 189.

*pieces from different architectural and natural sites*. Annabel J. Wharton, "The Tribune Tower: Spolia as Despoliation," in *Reuse Value: Spolia and Appropriation in Art and Architecture from Constantine to Sherrie Levine*, ed. Richard Brilliant and Dale Kinney (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2011), 179–97.

*antidote to modern materialism*. Alfred Granger, "The Tribune Tower as a Work of Architecture," *Western Architect* 34 (November 1925): 111–13, at 112: "Because it has Style, it is of our day and of our land, a land of aspiration and idealism in spite of the coarse materialism which surrounds us and at times engulfs us."

*Gothic radio structure*. *The Chicago Tribune* 94.38, September 22, 1935, final editions, A1.

### Giving Gothic: John D. Rockefeller Jr.

*aggregation of buildings*. For the most systematic history through the late 1970s, see Carol Herselle Krinsky, *Rockefeller Center* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978). On the number of buildings and so forth, p. xxiii.

*Ralph Adams Cram vivisected the style*. Krinsky, *Rockefeller Center*, 57–58.

*our secular cathedral*. Krinsky, *Rockefeller Center*, 2–13, 150.

*occupies the same central space*. Krinsky, *Rockefeller Center*, 11.

*modern-day pilgrims*. Krinsky, *Rockefeller Center*, 2 (citing Sean O'Casey, *Rose and Crown*): "The newcomer to New York City, American or foreigner, doesn't spend a glance on St. John's of Morningside Heights, or on St. Patrick's on Fifth Avenue, or on the Russian basilica on Fourth Avenue, or thereabouts, but makes for Rockefeller Center where he can get an eyeful worth seeing."

*pseudocathedrals formed into steps*. Krinsky, *Rockefeller Center*, 18.

*30 Rock*. Originally the RCA building, later the GE Building, now nicknamed 30 Rock as well as The Slab.

*the shrine*. Krinsky, *Rockefeller Center*, 150.

*his own space*. His office had dark and heavy antique paneling, ornate furniture, and, eventually, a fireplace, all in a Tudor style.

*fence*. Krinsky, *Rockefeller Center*, 138.

*Rockefeller would have preferred*. Krinsky, *Rockefeller Center*, 139. A different and apparently incorrect account of the architecture is given by David Garrard Lowe, “The Triumph of Rockefeller Center,” at [www.city-journal.org/html/5\\_3\\_a2.html](http://www.city-journal.org/html/5_3_a2.html). Lowe suggests that Rockefeller’s office on the 56th floor had a Gothic parapet immediately outside it, and that the space was situated so as to give him an outlook exclusively upon Saint Patrick’s Cathedral.

*the Gothic that Rockefeller favored*. Krinsky, *Rockefeller Center*, 138.

*association with collegiate Gothic*. On his eclectic tastes in architecture, see Krinsky, *Rockefeller Center*, 15.

*Edward’s father*. Steven V. Harkness.

*Standard Oil*. After being ruled an illegal monopoly in 1911, the original company was dissolved into thirty-three smaller ones.

*new components*. These pieces included “the Langon Chapel, the Pontaut Chapter House, the Boppard stained-glass windows, a host of doorways, and many other great additions.” See William H. Forsyth, “Five Crucial People in the Building of the Cloisters,” in *The Cloisters: Studies in Honor of the Fiftieth Anniversary*, ed. Elizabeth C. Parker (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, International Center of Medieval Art, 1992), [https://www.metmuseum.org/art/metpublications/the\\_cloisters\\_studies\\_in\\_honor\\_of\\_the\\_fiftieth\\_anniversary](https://www.metmuseum.org/art/metpublications/the_cloisters_studies_in_honor_of_the_fiftieth_anniversary), 50–62, at 58.

*building a castle-like structure*. For the information in this sentence and the following, see Forsyth, “Five Crucial People,” 54.

*reroofing of Reims cathedral*. Elizabeth Emery, “The Martyred Cathedral: American Attitudes toward Notre-Dame de Reims during the First World War,” in *Medieval Art and Architecture after the Middle Ages*, ed. Janet Marquardt and Alyce Jordan (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), 312–39, at 329–30.

*rocking on into the twenty-first century*. With the John D. Rockefeller III College at Princeton University. “Rocky,” which opened in the 2007–2008 academic year, draws together into a residential college structures built mostly in a twenty-first century iteration of Collegiate Gothic.

*Is it wise*. See <http://westnorth.com/2004/12/09/campus-tour>



*Riverside Church.* A linen card from the early days of the building at 490 Riverside Drive designates it simply as Rockefeller Church. The architects were Henry C. Pelton and Charles Collens.

*revived Gothic.* Mary Rebecca Leuchak, "'The Old World for the New': Developing the Design for The Cloisters," *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 23 (1988): 257–77, at 258, [https://www.metmuseum.org/art/metpublications/the\\_old\\_world\\_for\\_the\\_new\\_the\\_metropolitan\\_museum\\_journal\\_v\\_23\\_1988](https://www.metmuseum.org/art/metpublications/the_old_world_for_the_new_the_metropolitan_museum_journal_v_23_1988)

*Central Presbyterian Church.* 593 Park Avenue at East 64th Street, in the Lenox Hill neighborhood. The architect was Pelton in collaboration with Allen & Collens.

*Colgate Rochester Divinity School.* In 1928, the Colgate and the Rochester Theological Seminaries, both Baptist, merged to become this new entity. The architect was James Gamble Rogers. Since 1970 the seminary, atop a hill in the southeastern corner of Rochester, has been called the Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School, thanks to an additional merger with the alma mater of the civil rights leader, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

*without the aid of Thorstein Veblen's spectacles.* Harris, "Gilded Age Revisited," 548.

*ours is not a cathedral-building age.* Anon., "The Marvel of Cologne," *Hudson Register* (Hudson, NY), 14.138, Monday afternoon, November 3, 1879, 1; *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 18, 1880, 9; *St. Joseph Herald*, February 21, 1880, 4; *Decatur Review*, February 21, 1880, 3.

*An American Cathedral.* *American Architecture: Studies* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1892). The essay is most readily accessible in Schuyler, *American Architecture, and Other Writings*, 1: 229–45.

*global political and economic power.* Chris Brooks, *The Gothic Revival* (London: Phaidon Press, 1999), 399–400.

*empty ostentation and imprudent expenditure.* Thorstein Veblen, *Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York: Macmillan, 1899), 101.

*thundered against the extravagance and impracticality.* Veblen, *Theory of the Leisure Class*, 349: "The diversion of expenditure to honorific waste in such cases is not uncommon enough to cause surprise or even to raise a smile. An appreciable share of the funds is spent in the construction of an edifice faced with some aesthetically objectionable but expensive stone, covered with grotesque and incongruous details, and designed, in its battlemented walls and turrets and its massive portals and strategic approaches, to suggest certain barbaric methods of warfare. The interior of the structure shows the same guidance of the canons of conspicuous waste and predatory exploit. The windows, for instance, to go farther into detail, are placed with a view to impress

their pecuniary excellence upon the chance beholder from the outside, rather than with a view to effectiveness for their ostensible end in the convenience or comfort of the beneficiaries within; and the detail of interior arrangement is required to conform itself as it may to this alien requirement of pecuniary beauty.” The second and third sentences of this passage are quoted in William Harlan Hale, “Art vs. Yale University,” *The Harkness Hoot* 1.2, November 15, 1930: 17–32, at 31.

*protosocialism*. It has been written memorably: “Classic buildings were financed by merchant princes. Gothic buildings arose through the combined efforts of humble workmen.” See Jean F. Block, *The Uses of Gothic: Planning and Building the Campus of the University of Chicago (1892–1932)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Library, 1983), 7.

*might once have served as a mustering place*. Thorstein Veblen, *The Higher Learning in America: A Memorandum on the Conduct of Universities by Business Men* (New York: B. W. Huebsch, 1918), 145.

*wasteful, ornate, and meretricious edifices*. Veblen, *Higher Learning*, 147.

*disjointed grotesqueries*. Veblen, *Higher Learning*, 146.

## Seeing Chicago in Gray and White

*the White City and the Gray City*. Block, *Uses of Gothic*.

*French neoclassicism*. It was designed largely by Daniel Burnham and the landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted.

*Administration Building*. It was planned by the architect Richard Morris Hunt.

*the dynamos*. Adams, *EHA*, chap. 22, “Chicago (1893),” 1032–33.

*to allow for orderly growth*. The master plan was formulated under the architect Henry Ives Cobb.

*amusement park*. The Ferris Wheel, invented by George W. Ferris as America’s answer to the Eiffel Tower, erected for the French Exposition universelle of 1889, had constituted the signature attraction of the 1893 World’s Fair.

## Hooting at Yale Gothic

*short-lived*. *The Harkness Hoot* survived for only four years.

*announcing the design*. Yale University press release, February 1, 1926, quoting the librarian, Andrew Keogh, in the James Rowland Angell Papers, Yale Presidential Papers, Manuscript and Archives Collections, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale

University, New Haven, Connecticut, cited by Betsky, *James Gamble Rogers*, 121: “the architect’s solution will give us a building as efficient as an up-to-date factory and as beautiful as a cathedral.”

*in living architecture*. Hale, “Art vs. Yale University,” 18.

*Gothic-skyscraper style*. Girder Gothic is the prevailing phrase for buildings built with steel frames that are coated with a stone veneer to create a semblance of Gothic stonework.

*a diet of frozen mediaevalism*. Hale, “Art vs. Yale University,” 23.

*contrasted the final product*. He included two verse quotations by way of commentary, “You shall no longer take things at second or third hand, nor look through the eyes of the dead, nor feed on the spectres in books—Walt Whitman” and “There, because hee doth know / That shee was there a thousand years agoe, / He loves her rages...—John Donne.”

*an obituary letter*. *The Times* of London, in 1852: quoted by Aldrich, *Gothic Revival*, 176: “He it was who first exposed the shams and concealments of modern architecture, and contrasted it with the heartiness and sincerity of medieval works. He showed the fair outside of a modern building, having no relation to its construction, except that of a screen to hide its clumsy makeshifts. He then showed how the first principle of medieval work was to expose construction, and not to hide it, but to adorn it.” The passage was quoted repeatedly already in the nineteenth century.

*Culture is a sham*. Eric Gill, “Education for What?” in idem, *Essays: Last Essays and In a Strange Land* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1948), 37–45, at 45. The sentence concludes “... or a classical front put on a steel frame—like the *Daily Telegraph* building in Fleet Street.”

*a functionalist tour de force*. Pinnell, *Yale University*, 101.

*The façade is set up against the sky*. Symons, “Cathedrals,” 170. The passage continues, “It is an immense stone page, as if engraved upon the sky, and it is at once severe and sumptuous.”

*associations drawn between cathedrals and books*. Betsky, *James Gamble Rogers*, 120–27 (p. 126 for the imagery).

*Yale’s Cathedral Orgy*. William Harlan Hale, “Yale’s Cathedral Orgy,” *The Nation*, April 29, 1931: 471–72.

*Ralph Adams Cram responded*. “Artists vs. Yale University,” *The Harkness Hoot* 1.3, January 1, 1931: 42–45.

*Le Corbusier*. Among admirers the architect was known by the nickname of “Le Corbu.”

*gross generalizations*. Le Corbusier, *When the Cathedrals*, 140: “American universities are large, rich tribes encamped in the midst of greenery, with the detachment from events which the widespread Gothic style brings.”

*living cloistered lives*. Mardges Bacon, *Le Corbusier in America: Travels in the Land of the Timid* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), 101.

*elongated the authority behind the institution*. *Princeton Alumni Weekly*, December 13, 1902: 199–200, quoted by Turner, *Campus*, 227, and Solomonson, *Chicago Tribune*, 166.

*On the one hand*. For the two sides of the debate, see David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 125–82.

*The University of Chicago does not look its age*. Edwin E. Slosson, *Great American Universities* (New York: Macmillan, 1910), 429. Compare Hugh Ferriss, *The Metropolis of Tomorrow* (New York: I. Washburn, 1929), 16: “Architecture never lies. Architecture invariably expresses its Age correctly.”

*Modern scholarship had its birth*. Hale, “Art vs. Yale University,” 24.

*Dwight Chapel*. The architect was Henry Austin.

*Victorian dormitories*. Examples would include Farnam, Durfee, and Lawrance Hall. Lawrance Hall is located next to Phelps Hall, designed in the style of a Tudor gatehouse, which was built in 1895 as the final building in the row of Yale University buildings facing New Haven Green.

*Osborn Hall*. It was designed by the New York architect Bruce Price.

*Only one was entirely Georgian revival*. See Duke, *Importing Oxbridge*, 108.

*its design*. The library was built to commemorate the largesse of the corporate lawyer John William Sterling.

*soaring lightness and medievaesque gravitas*. Paul Goldberger, “James Gamble Rogers and the Shaping of Yale in the Twentieth Century,” in Vincent Scully et al., *Yale in New Haven: Architecture and Urbanism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University, 2004), 263–91. The comparison between lyrical lightness and gravitas is Goldberger’s.

*a mural at the western end of the counter*. The painting on the wall was made in 1932.

*personifications of arts and sciences*. They are Light, Truth, Science, Labor, Music, Divinity, Literature, and the Arts.

*religion and the past*. Margaret M. Grubiak, "Reassessing Yale's Cathedral Orgy: The Ecclesiastical Metaphor and the Sterling Memorial Library," *Winterthur Portfolio* 43.2,3 (2009): 159–84, at 174–78.

## World War I and Modernism

*on a dead faith*. Adams, *MSMC*, 522 (chap. 10, "The Court of the Queen of Heaven").

*a 1914 painting*. The artwork is by the Russian-born artist Sergey Solomko.

*pumping up hawkish values in young men*. Philip Jenkins, *The Great and Holy War: How World War I Became a Religious Crusade* (New York: HarperOne, 2014); Allen J. Frantzen, *Bloody Good: Chivalry, Sacrifice, and the Great War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004). For broad context, see Andrew Lynch, "Medievalism and the Ideology of War," in *The Cambridge Companion to Medievalism*, ed. Louise D'Arcens (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 135–50.

*the saintly dragon-slayer*. Joseph A. Kestner, "The Return of St. George 1850–1915," in *King Arthur's Modern Return*, ed. Debra N. Mancoff (New York: Garland, 1998), 83–98.

*war-weary voices*. Sandra Marina Schwab, "What is a Man? The Refuting of the Chivalric Ideal at the Turn of the Century," in *Beyond Arthurian Romances: The Reach of Victorian Medievalism*, ed. Lorretta M. Holloway and Jennifer A. Palmgren (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 217–31, at 218, 226–29.

*Resistance to modernism*. Lears, *No Place of Grace*.

*perceived to be innovative*. Already in 1932, Alfred H. Barr Jr., founder of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, curated there an exhibition on modern architecture that led to the popularization—in a book co-authored by his fellow Harvard graduate student, Philip Johnson—of the architectural concept "International Style." Barr had coined the architectural term on the basis of the International Style of Gothic art, to which he had been exposed in 1920 as a Princeton undergraduate in a course with Charles Rufus Morey. See "Barr, Alfred H[amilton], Jr.," in *Dictionary of Art Historians*, at [www.dictionaryofarthistorians.org/barra.htm](http://www.dictionaryofarthistorians.org/barra.htm); Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson, *The International Style: Architecture since 1922* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1932). In 1936, the art historian Nikolaus Pevsner articulated the contributions that architects of the Gothic revival had made to the development of avant-garde styles, and on account of this argument he entitled his book *Pioneers of the Modern Movement from William Morris to Walter Gropius* (London: Faber & Faber, 1936).

*a rousing oration*. Cram, "Recent University Architecture," 518: "We have not now, nor have had for three centuries, a civilisation that demanded or could create such artistic expression, but the light is already on the edges of the high hills, and we know



that a new dawn is at hand. In the meantime, like the monks in the dim monasteries of the Dark Ages, we cherish and conserve all that was great in our greatest past, building as well as we may new Oxfords and new Westminster Abbeys, new Lincolns, new Richmond Castles, new Haddon Halls, not as the last new word in architectural expression, but as schoolmasters and as prophets, content with the educational work we are accomplishing, leaving to our successors the equal but not more honourable task of voicing in novel and adequate form the new civilisation we are helping to create."

*Schuyler*. To describe the architecture of Yale, the critic quotes from Matthew Arnold a famous phrase on the oldest university town in England: "How enviable the man who has availed himself of the opportunity to recall, in bustling New Haven, the charm of 'that sweet city with her dreaming spires' of Oxford." See Montgomery Schuyler, "Architecture of American Colleges. II. Yale," *Architectural Record* 26 (November 1909): 393–416, at 416. The quotation is taken from Arnold's poem *Thyrsis*, written to lament a friend who died in 1861.

*introduction by Max Reinhardt*. Norman Bel Geddes, *A Project for a Theatrical Presentation of the Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri*, foreword Max Reinhardt, photography Francis Bruguière (New York: Theatre Arts, Inc., 1924): "Norman-Bel Geddes has those qualities which I most cherish in Americans: the inborn power, the natural pride, the child-like delight, essential to begin everything at the beginning, to discover the world anew, and with clear comprehension to establish himself practically in it. He builds castles in the air but he lays their foundations solidly in the ground. He drafts the plan, he places the bricks, and himself mixes the mortar. He is at once a visionary and an organizer. His love for the theatre is fortunate, it is sensuous and fruitful. In the middle ages he would have built cathedrals and made of them the cradle of our theatre."

*Victor Hugo's Notre-Dame de Paris*. The volume was published by the short-lived Book League of America.

*Grundtvig Church*. The church was designed by Peder Vilhelm Jensen-Klimt.

*denunciations of historicizing architecture*. See Wright as quoted by Hannah Heidi Levy, *Famous Wisconsin Artists and Architects* (Oregon, WI: Badger Books, 2004), 262: "Classicism is a mask and does not reflect transition. How can such a static expression allow interpretation of human life as we know it? A fire house should not resemble a French Chateau, a bank a Greek temple and a university a Gothic Cathedral. All of the *isms* are imposition on life itself by way of previous education."

*organic architecture*. The topic is too widely diffused in Wright's writings and designs to require specific documentation, but see John Sergeant, *Frank Lloyd Wright's Usonian Houses: The Case for Organic Architecture* (New York: Watson-Guptill, 1976).

*organic unity*. Wright, *Organic Architecture*, 11: "The Gothic cathedrals in the Middle Ages had much in them that was organic in character, and they became influential and beautiful in so far as that quality lived in them which was *organic*, as did all other architectures possessing it."

*extensive readings*. Henry-Russell Hitchcock, "Ruskin and American Architecture, or Regeneration Long Delayed," in *Concerning Architecture: Essays on Architectural Writers and Writing Presented to Nikolaus Pevsner*, ed. John Summerson (London, Allen Lane and Baltimore, MD: Penguin, 1968), 166–208, at 206; Donald Hoffmann, "Frank Lloyd Wright and Viollet-le-Duc," *The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 28 (1969): 173–83, especially at 174.

*engravings of medieval English cathedrals*. Frank Lloyd Wright, *An Autobiography* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1943), 11.

*spiritual mobilization*. Frank Lloyd Wright, "Studies and Executed Buildings (1910)," in *Frank Lloyd Wright: Essential Texts*, ed. Robert C. Twombly (New York: W. W. Norton, 2009), 109–34, at 118: "A revival of the Gothic spirit is needed in the art and architecture of modern life."

*feeling for the organic character of form*. "Studies and Executed Buildings," 120.

*Gothic architecture approached the organic*. Frank Lloyd Wright, *Genius and the Mobocracy* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1949), xi. Both this and the preceding citation come from Hoffmann, "Frank Lloyd Wright and Viollet-le-Duc," 174 nn. 26–27.

*first tall office tower*. Donald Hoffmann, *Frank Lloyd Wright, Louis Sullivan, and the Skyscraper* (Mineola, NY: Dover, 1998), 3.

*delighted Viollet-le-Duc*. Vincent Scully Jr., "Frank Lloyd Wright and Twentieth-Century Style," in idem, *Studies in Western Art*, 4 vols. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963), 4: 7–21, at 11.

*the American architect's conception of urban planning*. Hoffmann, *Frank Lloyd Wright*, 7–8.

*Tudor revival home*. The initial form was built in 1895 and a later replacement in 1923 after a fire leveled the first house in 1922.

*flattened ogival mullions*. Wayne Andrews, *American Gothic: Its Origins, Its Trials, Its Triumphs* (New York: Vintage Books, 1975), 141–42 (plate 90). This design detail was supplied in 1940.

*The last church Wright designed*. He completed the plans for it in 1958, and it was built between 1960 and 1963.

*Pole and Boulder Gothic*. The phrase is used (ascribed to Wright himself) in Thomas A. Heinz, *Frank Lloyd Wright Field Guide* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2005), 22.

*GI Bill*. The legislation is known formally as the Servicemen's Readjustment Act.

*Bombay Gothic*. The architect was Frederick Williams Stevens. See Christopher W. London, "Architect of Bombay's Hallmark Style: Stevens and the Gothic Revival," in *Bombay to Mumbai: Changing Perspectives*, ed. Pauline Rohatgi et al. (Mumbai, India: Marg, 1997), 236–49; idem, *Bombay Gothic* (Mumbai: India Book House, 2002).

*collegiate Gothic environs*. It would be interesting to know whether the giving rates and amounts of alumni at different colleges vary at all in relation to the predominant architectural styles on the corresponding campuses.



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## Abbreviations

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- LHA     *The Letters of Henry Adams*, ed. J. C. Levenson et al. 6 vols. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982–1988.
- MSMC   *Mont Saint Michel and Chartres*, in Henry Adams, *Novels, Mont Saint Michel, The Education*, ed. Ernest Samuels and Jayne N. Samuels, 337–714. New York: Library of America, 1983.
- OED     *Oxford English Dictionary*, ed. John Simpson and Edmund Weiner, 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989.

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